

ADD TO YOUR SCHOLARSHIP: CHALLENGES FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS TO ACADEMIC DISCIPLESHIP

**Keynote Address
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Introduction

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8).

Background to the Passage

Just prior to these verses, Peter was saying that God had given to the Christians to whom he was writing everything they needed to live godly lives and to partake of the divine nature and to escape the corruption in the world. Because of these things God had given to the followers of Jesus, Peter presents this outstanding statement about discipleship. After one has exercised faith in Christ, Peter says that Christian believers should be adding things to that basic faith.

- We are to add to our faith goodness.
- We are to add to goodness knowledge.
- We are to add to knowledge self-control.
- We are to add to the self-control perseverance.
- We are to add to the perseverance godliness.
- We are to add to the godliness brotherly kindness
- We are to add to our brotherly kindness love.

Peter then says that if Christian believers possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will make us effective and productive in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus. This is obviously a list of qualities that will make Christians to be more effective Christians.

I am not sure whether Peter was saying these things should be added to the faith in this particular sequence. These are just qualities necessary for one to become a mature Christian believer. Peter could only mention them one by one. I would guess that all of these qualities should be added somewhat simultaneously, though there are some that build on others.

Focus on the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ

What will be the result of adding all these qualities to our faith. Peter says that *“they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus*

Christ.” Note that Peter says that these things will make believers effective and productive in their knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- He did not say that they would improve our prayer life.
- He did not say that they would make us better evangelists.
- He did not say that they would make us more holy.
- He stressed that these would make us more knowledgeable.

Knowledge is an important word for Peter. The word is found five times in the three chapters or 2 Peter. That means that Peter used the word 1.7 times per chapter whereas Paul used the word 32 times in 87 chapters or .37 times per chapter.

Knowledge is perhaps the most basic focus of the Christian scholar’s life. We are people of knowledge. Knowledge is our basic raw material and our ultimate output.

- We discover knowledge.
- We teach knowledge.
- We preserve knowledge.
- We defend knowledge.

That suggests that knowledge was very important to Peter. I will say more about this later but thinking about this concept of knowledge in Peter led to another thought.

On the same day that Dr. Maiture called me about this meeting, I had this thought. “These are excellent steps into becoming a mature Christian. I wonder if acquiring and developing these qualities would also help to make one a good academic. In other words, is there anything we can learn from spiritual discipleship that would help us in academic discipleship? I decided that I would explore that possibility and this presentation is my attempt at doing so. I will allow you to determine whether there are parallels or not but I will make an effort to present some.

I am going to look at the various qualities of spiritual discipleship providing by Peter in this passage and compare those with the qualities one needs to develop as a good Christian academic. We will begin with “faith” the most basic of all of them.

Faith

Faith in Spiritual Discipleship

Faith is the first step in spiritual discipleship. In fact, it is the primary prerequisite in becoming a follower of Jesus. The faith that launches one on a spiritual journey has three parts. First, it is the ***genuine belief in something***. We have never seen Jesus but we genuinely believe that the things about Jesus recorded in the gospels are true and therefore we accept Jesus for who he is. Second, we must ***commit*** ourselves to Jesus. We can believe that Jesus exists without following him. However, genuine faith is commitment to following Jesus. Thirdly, genuine faith means to ***turn away*** from anything that will keep you from following Jesus. This is also called repentance. It is the negative part of faith—turning away from sin and all other gods to Christ. So faith is believing in something so strongly that you turn away from anything else and commit yourself to that thing.

Marriage is an illustration of faith. First a young man meets a young lady and learns many things about her. At that point, he certainly believes in her. In fact, he believes in her so much he is convinced she is the person with whom he wants to spend the rest of his life. Next he turns away from all other ladies and finally he permanently commits himself exclusively to her for the rest of his life. That is an example of faith.

Faith in Academic Scholarship

Though the parallel is not perfect, I believe there are indeed some similarities between our Christian faith and our service as a Christian academic.

First, we learn about academics. Every day that we are in school, we are learning about knowledge and acquiring knowledge and schools. By the time we go to school many years and graduate from the university, certainly with a postgraduate degree, we know a whole lot about academics. However, just knowing about academics does not make you an academic. The second step we take is that we make a decision to turn away from other professions. To become a real academic we turn away from the business world and the media world and the entertainment world and sometimes we even resign from pastoring a church. Third, we commit ourselves totally to being academics.

Obviously, as I said before, the parallel is not exact. There are some academics who actually do some other kind of work but the general principle is if you are going to be a really professional academic, you need to commit your whole life to it.

This is *academic faith*. It is turning away from other professions and committing ourselves to becoming a scholar and an academic. What does it mean to be an academic? It means three things.¹

An academic does teaching.

Academics pass along what they know to others who do not know these things. Even more important, academics teach people how to learn and develop specific skills. We must go beyond just teaching knowledge to helping people learn how to think and learn. Perhaps the bulk of an academic's time is spent in preparing for class, teaching in class and marking assignments and exams. If one does not like to teach, he is not likely called to academics.

An academic does research.

A person cannot really teach unless he or she possesses certain kinds of knowledge. You have to know something to teach. You obviously learn a lot of things when you are a student. However, your learning in school is only preparatory to teach you how to do research and discover new truth or at least get new insights into truth you already know. There are many kinds of research.

- You do research through researching literature.
- You do research on the Internet.
- You do research in the real world.

The bottom line is that you cannot be a good academic by just teaching. You must constantly be learning and growing and discovering truth through research.

¹ Katrina Korb, *Weaving Faith into Academics*, Africa Christian Academics, Bukuru, 2017. Pages 2-3

An academic serves the academic community.

Institutions of higher learning do many other things other than just teaching and research. So any time you are doing any of those other things that support the overall goal of the institution to teach and conduct research, you are providing a service to the academic world. This includes things like:

- Serving on committees
- Counseling with students
- Doing administrative work
- Supervising the research of students
- Representing the institution at various functions

And you do all of this in tertiary (post-secondary) institutions.

When you sign the dotted line of your contract, this is what you are committing yourself to. You are exercising ***academic faith*** which is believing in something enough that you commit yourselves to it. I would assume that the majority of people who are here today are academics. The day you signed the contract to teach in a tertiary institution, you became an academic. For most of you, it is a permanent life-long commitment. Whenever you got that contract, most of you probably invited some friends together and “washed it.” This was a public celebration to acknowledge and give thanks to God for this new and special job. That celebration is a bit like baptism, which is a public celebration in which one public proclaims his commitment to Christ. From this time onwards, there is no backing out. You are a baptized academic. However, this is only the initial step of becoming an academic. Academics need to grow and develop. In other words, academics need to add things to this basic academic faith. What are those things? Using the spiritual discipleship model we can move on to some things we must add to our academic faith.

Virtue

Peter says here that you must “*add to your faith virtue.*”

Virtue in Spiritual Discipleship

This is the Greek word *arete*. It means “*moral excellence or virtue.*”²² It is translated several different ways, including “*goodness*” (NIV), “*virtue*” (ESV, KJV, RSV), and “*moral excellence*” (NASB, NLT). I like the translation “*moral excellence.*” This word is dealing not with the mind but with moral character. It suggests that when a person converts to Christ, one of the first things that happens is the Holy Spirit starts working on the person’s character.

- If the convert was deceptive, he or she will become more honest.
- If the new believer had been controlled by the flesh, he or she will become more disciplined and controlled by the Holy Spirit.
- If that new Christian had been guilty of using foul language, he or she will learn to speak with appropriate language and reject negative and sinful language.
- If that person had been guilty of being lazy and sloppy and careless and foolish, the Holy Spirit will convict that person to become a person of excellence and wisdom.

²² William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 1957, p. 105

The bottom line is that one of the first steps that takes place after conversion is that God starts transforming that person into being a person of integrity. One has been justified but that persons needs to be sanctified with is the process of dealing with sin in the life.

Virtue in Academic Scholarship

An essential quality of any Christian academic is virtue or integrity or moral excellence. We are going to look at several specific applications of integrity in academics.

Integrity in the Classroom

Although we are tempted to do so at times, we as academics must not be guilty of making up the things we teach in our classrooms. We cannot treat things as facts that we are not sure of. There appears to be a belief in many people that a teacher should know everything and it would be embarrassing to admit that you do not know a certain thing. There is no sin in ignorance, even within your own discipline. We have to be honest with our students and tell them when we do not know something.

When I lived in Port Harcourt, I was invited to conduct a workshop in the riverine area on eschatology. During the workshop, the participants kept asking me questions about things I did not know. I freely admitted that I did not know those things. Afterwards, my student who had arranged the workshop said, “Oga, why did you keep saying that you did not know those things. You are a lecturer. You should know those things.”

On the other hand, I have watched student teachers, when asked a question I knew that they did not know, just make up something that would hopefully satisfy the student. I am sure you must know that there is no lecturer in the world who knows everything in his field. And it is unethical and immoral to just make up answers to things that you do not know to satisfy this misplaced belief that you should know everything in your field. There are honest disagreements within disciplines about various issues and we do not have to apologize for taking a strong position on one side or the other. However, it is unethical just to make up facts or speak with certainty about things that you do not know.

The antidote to this kind of sloppy and unethical teaching is to seriously prepare for your classes. If you are teaching properly you are learning a whole lot more about your discipline than you learned in the university because your responsibility to teach will drive you to learn and stay ahead of your students.

Integrity in Marking Projects and Exams

University lecturers sometimes get accused of just throwing exams in the air and giving grades based upon how they land. I doubt if that ever happens. However, there are times when we are tempted to take shortcuts in our marking.

- We mark hastily.
- We mark based upon our knowledge of the students’ abilities.
- We are often very generous with points to those students we like but are very strict with students we don’t like.

We must take every precaution to be fair in our marking. We must remember marking is a major responsibility we have.

Integrity in Research

Doing good research is hard work. Therefore, again, we academics are tempted to take shortcuts.

- It is unethical to take the research of others and use it as your own, without appropriate citations. This is plagiarism.
- It is unethical to say we have followed certain research protocols when we have not done those things.
- It is unethical to change research results to support a thesis we are trying to prove.
- It is unethical to ignore research results that do not support a thesis.
- It is unethical to sign off on research that you have not personally examined and verified.
- It is unethical to put your name on a research article when you have not contributed substantially to the research or the writing.

This is sometimes called “guest authorship.” Sometimes a person will agree to pay for the publication fee for having his or her name put on the article. This is completely dishonest and unethical and illegal.

Don’t compromise your research. It can return to bite you later.

Integrity in Handling Money

The Bible says, “*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*” (1 Timothy 6:10).

It is not only businessmen who can be greedy for money. Academics can be just as greedy as anyone else in the society. Academics who have access to money have at times padded their research accounts and impress accounts.

- It is unethical to collect money for work you did not do. This raises questions about whether or not we should accept the money that we receive when our unions are on strike.
- It is unethical to authorize money for other people who did not do the work for which they are being paid.
- It is unethical to demand that students pay for things that their university fees have already paid for.
- It is unethical to take gifts from students when they are still your students. The wise man said, “*Giving a gift can open doors; it gives access to important people!*” (Proverb 18:16).
- It is unethical to report to the group giving you a grant that you worked 10 days when you only worked eight days.

Integrity in Interacting with the Opposite Sex

Academics have access to very intelligent and attractive young members of the opposite sex and they have authority over them and have things like grades that they need. It is possible to use our power over students to get sexual favors.

I saw a headline a couple of day ago that said, “Sex for Mark OAU Professor Lands in Prison.” This is a case where a young female student made a recording of a professor

demanding that she either sleep with him or he would give her a failing grade. He has been terminated from the university and is now in jail awaiting trial.³ The @metoo movement in the US, in which women are coming forward to expose those superiors who have abused them sexually is making men to be more careful about their relationship with women. However, it should be our Christian faith, not the fear of being exposed, that should motivate us to have proper ethical relationships with the members of the opposite sex.

Certainly Christian academics must be characterized by moral excellence. Without moral excellence we may be academics but we will not be Christian academics.

Knowledge

Peter says “*and to virtue, (add) knowledge.*” Knowledge is understanding the truth about any given topic. Though certain knowledge is innate, we normally acquire knowledge through learning which is a life-long process.

Knowledge in Spiritual Discipleship

Jesus said, “*You will know the truth and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32). Truth is the core of knowledge and can be used almost interchangeably with knowledge. The truth about Jesus is what provides salvation for us. Therefore, evangelism is a dispensing of truth or knowledge. The teachings of Jesus and the lifestyle of Jesus are knowledge that must be passed on to Christian believers if they are going to grow in their faith and become more like Jesus. So studying and learning new truth is at the core of Christian discipleship.

Knowledge in Academic Scholarship

In 2 Peter 2, Peter says this about the enemies of the Christian faith that were trying to negatively impact these readers:

- “*there will be **false teachers***” 2:1
- “*They will secretly introduce **destructive heresies***” 2:1
- “*Many will . . . bring **the way of truth** into disrepute.*” 2:2
- “*These **teachers** will exploit you*” 2:3

All of these statements are related to knowledge. The enemies of God are people who will try to distort the truth.

- Knowledge is the heart of academics.
- Academics teach the truth.
- Academics do research, seeking for the truth.
- Academics provide service in support of the general infrastructure of seeking and distributing truth.

I believe that there is none of these things we need to add to our academic career that is more important than truth. Here are some fundamental convictions about truth from a Christian point of view.

³ “Sex-for-Mark: OAU Professor Lands in Prison.” *Vanguard*, 19 November 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/11/sex-for-mark-oau-professor-lands-in-prison/> Retrieved on 21 November 2018.

All truth comes from God and is therefore sacred.

John begins his gospel at the beginning, even before creation but also including creation. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*” (John 1:1-3). If all things were created by God, that means that the truth related to all those things came from God also. If that is true, then the study of all things is the study of theology and brings glory to God the creator of all knowledge.

- Since God created animals, biology is as sacred as theology.
- Since the laws of physics were created by God, engineering is as sacred as theology.
- Since human beings were created by God, sociology and anthropology and psychology and anatomy were all created by God and are as sacred as theology.

No one can know all truth so there is the need for specialization.

The amount of knowledge there is in the world is almost unlimited. However, the capacity of one human being to discover and understand truth is very limited. Therefore, it is good for academics to focus on one specific area of truth and try to discover and disseminate as much truth as possible from that discipline.

In Paul’ discussion of the gifts of the Spirit he says, “*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them*” (1 Corinthians 12:4). All of these gifts together build up the body of Christ (14:12). Paul then mentions people are given various ministries to serve the body of Christ. In a similar way God gives to people various kinds of interests and the whole world benefits as each one explores those things they are interested in.

All truth has become distorted or perverted and must be corrected and restored.

One of the Hebrew words for sin is ‘*awah*’ which means to pervert or distort such as an old person who has a back that is bent over (Psalm 38:6). Another Hebrew word for sin is ‘*Ra*’ which has the idea of breaking or destruction. The seven scrawny cows in Pharaoh’s vision were described as ‘*ra*’ (Genesis 41:3). This is also consistent with the picture of the enemy who, according to Jesus, comes “*to steal and kill and destroy*” (John 10:10). Since truth is the thing that sets one free, it is one the enemy’s goals to twist and distort and pervert and destroy the truth that was originally created by God.

We can assume that there is untruth and distorted truth and incomplete truth in every academic discipline. That means, therefore, that one of the major responsibilities of the Christian academic is the restoration of truth as God created it to be.

Paul has underscored this truth in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 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 (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).*

In this passage Paul talks about “*the world.*” Worldliness is simply thinking and reasoning like the world does. Paul emphatically declares God’s people do not think like the world. To

show us how seriously Paul believed these things, he used strong military language to make his arguments.

However, in this passage he is not really thinking about fighting in either the physical or spiritual sense of the word. The fighting he is talking about here is resisting and attacking the way of thinking and the perversions of truth the enemy is pushing on us. Note these applications of the military metaphor:

We demolish arguments. The word “*demolish*” is a military word. The word “*argument*” in this context is the word *logismos* which is the word from which we get logic. The world attempts to use various kinds of logical arguments to undermine God’s claims. Paul said that it is our responsibility to demolish those arguments. However, we are not going to demolish any arguments without serious thought and study. That is where our Christian academics in the various disciplines become important. It is the duty of our Christian academics to do the necessary research and give the necessary thought so they can destroy the flesh-based logic of the unbelieving world.

We bring down high things that oppose the knowledge of God. The word translated “pretension” (NIV) in this context meant “high things.” It referred to arguments that appear to be prestigious and scholarly, using words well-educated people would use. These are arguments couched in professional and academic language designed to undermine the absolute truth that comes from God. Such high sounding arguments are only a cheap imitation of God’s holistic truth. It is the duty of Christian academics to destroy such arguments. The idea is that we as thoughtful Christians must unmask the high sounding arguments that the worldly scholars present. A. T. Robertson says about this passage, “Paul aims to pull down the top-most perch of audacity in their reasonings against the knowledge of God.”⁴

How are we going to do this? We are going to do this by superior research and better logic and more convincing arguments. And we do all of this in the power of the Holy Spirit who has promised to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

We bring into captivity every thought to make it obedient to Christ. I used to think that this passage referred to me forcing myself to bring all of my thoughts into reflecting on and obedience to Christ. I thought this verse was urging us to discipline our minds, similar to the way Philippians 4:8 tells us—to think on things that are pure and holy and praiseworthy. However, by examining the context of this passage carefully, it is obvious that is not what it is talking about.

The word translated “*thought*” here is the word *noema* which could be translated simply as “thought” or even an evil thought. I believe this passage is simply saying we Christians must not only demolish the arguments of the enemy and expose the high sounding rhetoric but we must go on the offensive and bring every thought—every academic discipline—every truth under the authority of Jesus Christ and into conformity with the truth of God. We must make sure every discipline is brought in line with the way Christ views it. We are being compelled to discover that stamp of God that is on everything thing God has created.

That is a big responsibility. And this is the responsibility of the Christian academic.

⁴ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, electronic version; no page

Add to Your Scholarship

- The average layman cannot do this.
- The average preacher may even struggle to do this.
- The theologian cannot do this for every possible academic discipline in the world.

It will take Christian academics in all disciplines, searchers of truth who are committed to the authority of Scripture and to discovering and learning truth in a legitimate way. It will take these kinds of academics who can thoughtfully study and understand and explain God's perspective on every discipline God has created. Christian academics are seekers after the truth and dispensers of the truth and defenders of the truth. Without this kind of commitment to God's absolute truth, one may be an academic but will not be a Christian academic.

Discipline

Peter next writes "*and to knowledge, (add) self-control.*"

Discipline in Spiritual Discipleship

Self-control or discipline is the ability to restrain one's thinking and attitudes and actions. It is resisting temptation to do something improper or sinful. Just a few verses later in 2 Peter, Peter describe a group of unbelievers with this terms: "*those who follow corrupt desires,*" (2:10) "*bold and arrogant*" (2:10), "*brute beasts, creatures of instinct*" (2:12), "*carouse in the daylight,*" (2:13), "*eyes full of adultery,*" (2:14), "*experts in greed,*" (2:14), "*they mouth empty, boastful word,*" (2:18), "*they entice people,*" (2: 18) and are "*slaves of depravity.*" If there was ever a picture of indiscipline, this is a clear picture of it. Peter hints that this is the kind of people his readers were before coming to Christ. Therefore, if this is the kind of people they were before submitting to Christ, they needed a whole lot of discipline to break away from those habit and attitudes.

So Peter says that they need to add to their knowledge self-control. Self-control is also the last of the characteristics mentioned in the cluster of the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23. If we want to advance in our Christian faith, it will take discipline.

Discipline in Academic Scholarship

One of the first things that I learned after enrolling in my PhD program is that one does not have to be brilliant to get a PhD but one does have to be disciplined. After supervising a number of PhD students, I have become even more convinced of that. I have had brilliant PhD students and I have had some PhD students who were intelligent but not really brilliant. However, I have never had a PhD student to complete his program who was not disciplined.

- It takes discipline and hard work to get the necessary education to be an academic and it takes that same kind of discipline to become a good academic.
- It takes discipline to do research because it is tedious and sometimes not very enjoyable work.
- It takes discipline to read boring projects that are poorly written.
- It takes discipline to mark projects and exams and to prepare the results within the time stipulated.
- It takes discipline to keep yourself in front of a computer for hour after hour in order to produce articles and books and other things that you need to write as an academic. You get tired and sometimes you would just like to quit but academics don't quit.
- It takes discipline to excuse yourself from others so you can do your work.

Add to Your Scholarship

We are tempted to think this is rude. However, if a medical doctor received a call of an injured patient, he would not continue to sit there and visit while people were hurting. In a similar way, Christian academics must carefully guard their time and not be unnecessarily deterred by people just wanting to socialize. This is hard to do but we must work at it.

Academics are not normally required to be in their offices from 8:00 to 5:00 every day. They have much greater flexibility with their time and less accountability with their time than non-academic staff. The temptation to academics is to use that time to do other things that are not part of their responsibilities.

- They may be doing some other kind of business.
- They may be teaching in another institution.
- They may be serving as consultants to industry.
- They may be spending too much time on the Internet.

There is nothing necessarily wrong with any of those things as long as academics fulfill their first responsibility to the university and they do not shortchange their students with their other activities. One of the characteristics that will insure success in practically any discipline is discipline or self-control. With it, you will be successful. Without it, you will fail.

Perseverance

Peter said “*and, add to your self-control perseverance.*” These words overlap a lot. A disciplined person is one who perseveres and one usually cannot persevere without discipline. The emphasis on discipline or self-control is upon controlling one’s actions. The emphasis on perseverance is in continuing in positive course of action despite obstacles, criticism, and other discouraging circumstances.

Perseverance in Spiritual Discipleship

The only faith that is successful faith is one that continues. Twice Matthew records Jesus as saying “*the one who stands firm to the end will be saved*” (Matthew 10:22; 24:13). In the latter part of 2 Peter 2, Peter warns about those who apparently started out with the believers to whom he is writing but for some reason became “*entangled*” and were “*overcome*” by the world (2 Peter 2:20) and “*turned their backs*” on the “*way of righteousness*” (2:21). Peter declares they will be worse off than when they began (2:20). He says that they are like dogs returning to the vomit and a cleaned-up sow that returns to her “*wallowing in the mud*” (2:22). Evangelism that leads to a successful commitment to Christ and even baptism does not guarantee either final salvation nor advanced maturity in the faith. Judas is the prime example. It is perseverance that leads one to a mature Christian life and to eternal life.

Perseverance in Academic Scholarship

One needs to persevere in fulfilling God’ will.

I believe that our vocations are tied to the gifts and calling that God has given to us.

Bezalel was an architect and builder who was involved in building the mobile temple (tabernacle) in the wilderness. Exodus reads: “*I have chosen (“chosen” found in ESV, KJV, NASB, RSV) Bezalel son of Uri . . . filled him with the Spirit of God . . . to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze . . .*” (Exodus 31:2-5). This was a man who had

what many would call a ‘secular profession’ but was called by God to use that profession for God’s work. If God has called you to be an academic, then you have no choice but to persevere in that calling. And if one views the academic profession as a calling from God, you have no choice but to persevere in that field.

One needs to persevere to the terminal degree.

You can become an academic with only a Master’s Degree. I personally taught in a Bible college for three years with only a master’s degree. However, as I began to feel that God was calling me to become an academic rather than an army chaplain, which was my first career choice, I knew I had to go back to school and get better prepared. There may be rare exceptions but I would encourage everyone who is serving as an academic with anything less than a terminal degree in your field to persevere to the end. Climb that final mountain.

One needs to persevere in the promotion exercises.

I am not a person who has had a lot of interest in titles and positions. In fact, for the first 12 years or so I worked at the University of Jos, I did not participate in the promotion exercise. I was a Senior Lecturer and that enabled me to supervise PhD students and do what I wanted to. It was my own student, the late Professor Gwamna Dogara who came to me one time and said, “Dr. McCain, what you are doing is not good. You have enough publications to be promoted. You should not remain at one level. You will find there are more privileges and opportunities with a higher academic rank.” I knew he was right so when the next promotion exercise came around, I submitted the paper work and my publications and was promoted to Reader and after three more years was promoted to professor.

I learned that Gwamna was right. There is no sin in seeking to be used by God to a greater degree. Higher rank gives you greater respect. Greater respect gives you more opportunities to serve. Reaching the terminal promotion of professor gives you an opportunity to help shape policy by making you a member of the Senate and also opens up other doors of opportunity. An academic that remains at one level will stagnate. Thus, it is necessary to persevere and overcome all obstacles that will keep you from being promoted.

One needs to persevere in research and publishing.

Perhaps the most important thing necessary for promotion is to have evidence of research through publication in peer-reviewed journals. If you are going to be an academic, you just have to be involved in research and writing. I am aware that some people just love to teach and are good at teaching but not very good at research. Teaching is a gift from God and research is actually different gift from God. I really do not have the answer to that dilemma. However, I can assure you that people who are involved in research are constantly learning and people who are constantly learning make good teachers.

Sometimes you see people who do well in their early research but they develop the mentality of writing only for promotion and not for the joy of discovery. This is a problem we must overcome. A few years ago, I received a request to access a lecture’s works for promotion. He did his PhD outside of Nigeria. It was obviously well supervised and his PhD was excellent work. However, when he returned to Nigeria, his work became sloppy and the level of excellence decreased. He continued publishing but he did not publish at a level he was capable of doing. This is a part of the letter I wrote to the Vice Chancellor about his work:

One of the disappointing things about Dr. XXX's works is the difference between the academic work he did for his PhD thesis and the work that he has produced since. Though the subsequent peer-reviewed articles are satisfactory, his dissertation was a brilliant piece of exegetical and theological research and writing. It makes one wonder which is the real Dr. XXX. If he is capable of doing the kind of research that could be found in theological dictionaries, why should he not continue to produce at that level? I recommend that the university administration encourage this capable scholar to return to the level of research he demonstrated in his student days.

I encourage you to persevere in the search for excellence and completeness in all areas of academia.

Just as perseverance is necessary for spiritual discipleship, it is likewise essential for academic scholarship.

- Do not grow weary in well doing.
- Do not become lukewarm in the fulfillment of your calling.
- Do not allow the latter part of your academic life to become worse than the earlier part.

Keep on persevering toward excellence.

Godliness

Peter continued, “. . . *and to perseverance, (add) godliness.*” The word translated “godliness” is the word *eusebeia* and is translated reverence, respect piety, and godliness.⁵ It comes from two words, *eu* which means “good” and *sebo* which means “to worship” or be devout. It is the characteristic of those who are keenly aware of God in their lives and respect, acknowledge and obey God. The ultimate result of this word is to imitate God and to reproduce the character of God in one's life.

Godliness in Spiritual Discipleship

Perhaps the ultimate goal of Christian discipleship is to be like God. It is not always easy to figure out how to do that. One hint at that is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament about God's expectation about how his people should be like him is the statement: “. . . *be holy, because I am holy*” (Leviticus 11:44, 45; 1 Peter 1:16). Holiness may be thought of as the sum total of God's moral character. Therefore, the responsibility of every person who respects God and reverences God is to imitate the moral character of God. What does that mean?

- It means to imitate him in his love for people.
- It means to imitate him in his forgiveness of people.
- It means to imitate him in his fairness and justice.
- It means to imitate him in his gracious giving nature.
- It means to imitate him in his pure and holy thoughts.

These are goals the Christian is striving to develop and improve.

⁵ “εὐσέβεια” *Thayers Greek Lexicon*, in Bibleworks Software, np

Godliness in Academic Scholarship

If our career as an academic is a pursuit of truth and if God is the author of all truth, it is important to get to know this God and to understand his nature and imitate him as much as possible. The ultimate knowledge is knowledge about God. The ultimate application of the ultimate knowledge is to imitate that God and be made more and more in his image.

If one really wanted to study and learn everything he could about Facebook, one of the most important things one could do is to get to know Mark Zuckerberg. The more one spent time with Mark both formally and informally, the more one would understand the Facebook phenomenon.

Being a godly Christian can aid the researcher in several ways.

- The more one gets to know God, the more one will understand the knowledge God has created.
- The more like God one is, the more honest and sincere he will be in his research. This will always produce better and more complete knowledge.
- The more godly one is, the more he or she will be motivated to discover the truth that God has created.
- The closer one is to God, the more the researcher can pray that God will give him or her insight into the truth one is seeking.
- The more academics love God, the more they will love God's people, including students which will give greater motivation and cause them to work harder at developing and presenting truth.

All of the ancient universities were started by Christians who believed that the pursuit of knowledge was a godly activity. Isaac Newton, is most well-known for his discovery and description of universal gravitation and is considered by some to be the most influential scientist of all time.⁶ When he was asked later in his life about his achievements, he said,

I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself now and then in finding a smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.⁷

Though of course all scientists and all academicians are not Christian believers, many sincere believers have been in the forefront of scientific discovery. Perhaps one of the reasons is that they are motivated by the holy curiosity that God has built within all human beings (Proverbs 25:2). Jesus' statement is certainly appropriate for the Christian academic: "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*" (Matthew 6:33). As we Christian academics seek God in our personal and professional lives, God will reward us with success in our academic lives.

⁶ Dao, Christine. "Man of Science, Man of God: Isaac Newton." *Acts & Facts*. 37 (5): 8.

<https://www.icr.org/article/newton>. Accessed on 22 November 2018. This article also contains another quote from Isaac Newton about his faith: "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being...This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion he is wont to be called Lord God "pantokrator," or Universal Ruler."

⁷ Biography.com: Editors. "Isaac Newton Biography," The Biography.com Website, A&E Television Networks. <https://www.biography.com/people/isaac-newton-9422656> . Accessed 22 November 2018

Mutual Affection

Peter continues, “*and to godliness, (add) mutual affection.*” The word “*mutual affection*” is the Greek word *philadelphia*. The word is made up of two words *philos* (love) and *adelphos* (brother) and is most often translated “*brotherly love.*” This is the warm mutual affection that family members and friends have for one another. The next and final word will be *agape* which is another word for love.⁸ Because of this overlap, I am going to use *philadelphia* to stress one idea and *agape* to stress related by slightly different ideas.

Mutual Affection in Spiritual Discipleship

When a person is “*born again,*” he enters a new family. Depending upon his church background, he may have only the smallest knowledge of the people who are in this new body he has joined by his conversion. However, these are his brothers and sisters in Christ and over time, he will develop a love for these people similar to the love he has for his own family members. Note these verses:

- *Be devoted to one another in love.* (Romans 12:10)
- *Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.* (Hebrews 13:1)
- *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.* (1 Peter 1:22). This verse also links *philadelphia* an *agape*.
- *Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.* (1 Peter 3:8).

The point is that the body of Christ is a big family and that we should be as close to and show the same love for our fellow believers as we do for our families.

Mutual Affection in Academic Scholarship

To whom should we show mutual affection as academics? The point is like believers and the church, all academics are part of a worldwide academic family. Or to say this another way: Academics, like a local church, belong to a particular institutional family. It is natural that you will develop close family friendships in the institution that you are part of. Friends love each other; friends support one another; friends help one another; friends empower one another. And this is the kind of relationships we should have with our fellow academics.

How can academics show mutual affection for one another?

- We help by substituting in classes and sitting in for exams.
- We help by reading and editing papers.
- We help by working with junior colleagues.
- We help by sharing in the problems that our colleagues have when they experience some kind of difficulty or tragedy.

⁸ This and the next word overlap a good bit and at times are used interchangeably. For example, Paul state in 1 Thessalonians 4:9: “*Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other*” In the first part of the verse were Paul says “*about your love for one another*” he uses the word *philadelphias* but at the end of the chapter where he says “*you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other*” he uses the word *agapao*.

Add to Your Scholarship

- We help by correcting our academic friends when they are going astray.
- We help by praying for one another and praying with one another.
- We help by demonstrating family love to our colleagues.

Non-academics sometimes look at academics as if they are cold, stern people who just read books all day and do not have emotions or much of a life. That is not truth. Academics have the same emotions and same problems and same joys that other people have and we as Christian academics should fully participate in the extended family of the academic world and particularly the Christian academics.

Love

Peter concludes this section with the phrase “and to mutual affection (add) love.” As stated above the word love is the Greek word *agape*. This is word that describe not so much the love of the emotions as *philadelphia* does but the love of the will whereby a person makes a decision to love others.

Love in Spiritual Discipleship

Paul says there are three great virtues within Christianity, faith, hope and love. *“But the greatest of these is love”* (1 Corinthians 13:13). This is the kind of love you love your neighbor with (Matthew 22:39). This is the kind of love that your love your enemy with. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”* (Matthew 5:43-44). How can you love your enemy who has done terrible things to you? You may not be able to work up a loving feeling toward him like the feelings you have toward your family members but you can make a decision to treat that person lovingly, even if you do not feel loving while doing it. This is not a natural type of love. It is natural to love ourselves and put ourselves first. However, this mature type love is a selfless love; it is a love that puts others first, even if they are obnoxious people. This is the quality that a Christian is always striving for—to be so filled with the love of God that we treat everyone lovingly.

Love in Academic Scholarship

How can this kind of love be reproduced or what does this kind of love have to do with academics? There are many possible applications to this but I will stress only two.

Love the Truth.

Paul makes an interesting statement to the Thessalonians: *“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to **love the truth** and so be saved”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). According to this passage, one of the things that people will be judged for is the fact that they do not love the truth. I find it interesting that Paul uses the word *agapao* here. In other words, we as individuals and certainly, as scholars, must be people who not only search for the truth and dispense the truth and defend the truth, we must love the truth. Remember this is not necessarily an emotional word. It is a decision of the will. This means that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the truth.

How can you love the truth? You love truth like you love people.

Add to Your Scholarship

- You spend time with the truth.
- You think positive thoughts about the truth.
- You talk with others about the truth.
- You devote your life to the truth.
- You make sacrifices for the truth.

If you do these things, you will be a lover of the truth. And if you are a lover of the truth, you have taken a giant step toward being a Christian scholar.

Love your Students.

Sometimes we academics jokingly say “A university would be a great place to work if it were not for the students.” It is students that give us trouble and create the most stress in our profession. Some of our students are easy to love.

- They sit in the front row.
- They always raise their hand first when a question is asked.
- They are eager to ask questions.
- They study for their tests and exams.
- They carry your briefcase after the class.

Other students can be arrogant; they can be irritating; they can be ungrateful; they can be foolish; they can be dishonest; they can be uninterested in your class; they can be disrespectful; they can be immature; they can be obnoxious and unlovable.

However, they are the one set of humans God has called academics to work with. Therefore, we have no choice but to love them. If your students know you love them, they will listen better. If they see in your actions you are going the second mile to teach your class, they will appreciate it and invest more energy in your class. However, if you respond to their negative attitudes by having a negative attitude yourself, you are guaranteeing that these students will be mediocre at best and complete failures at worst. The difference between good teachers and great teachers is the amount they love their students.

The Result

What will be the result of academics who are characterized by these kinds of qualities? Peter says, “*For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1:8). What does that mean?

Results in Spiritual Discipleship

If Christians will develop these characteristics in every increasing quantities, Peter says that this will keep them for “*being ineffective and unproductive*” in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. To say this in a positive way, these believers will be effective and productive in their understanding of the teachings about Jesus and in their living out the Christian faith. In other words, these qualities insure spiritual maturity. They help one to climb the latter of becoming mature and Christ-like. They guarantee that one will reach the highest levels of spiritual development. People will look at such people and say, “That person is a real Christian.”

Results in Academic Scholarship

If academics possess these qualities in a parallel sense, this will insure that they will be effective and productive in their academic careers.

- They will advance when the time for promotions comes.
- They will become known in their academic field through their publications and presentations.
- They will be sought after to present papers and conduct workshops.
- They will be spoken highly of by their students for dozens of years.
- They will be recognized by award giving bodies for their achievements.
- They will be connected to the God they serve.

The ultimate result of academic discipleship will be that God's kingdom will be advanced on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Most important, they will fulfill God's will for their lives and enjoy God's robust favor and blessing. This is God's way of becoming a successful, fulfilled Christian academic.

Conclusion

ECWA is not creating this special fellowship to produce mediocre academics. ECWA is creating this fellowship and encouraging her scholars to be effective and productive academics who are a testimony for ECWA but even more important an example and an inspiration to all other academics and the students they teach.

My challenge to the ECWA Scholars Fellowship is that you should lead the way. Climb that mountain of academic excellence and the rest of us will try to follow.