

DOES WORK MATTER? GATOR CALLINGS

By Laura Lynch

Whether you are a college student or are looking back through time, we think you will be encouraged by this glimpse into the lives of some of our faith and vocation seminar participants.

Last year we initiated these year-long seminars, led by Christian professionals in mentoring roles, to help students reflect on the meaning of work from a biblical perspective. Students participate in a shared meal, discuss assigned readings and develop a theological and cultural framework which seeks to shape their understanding of work now and in the future. Students are selected through an application process with limited space. Thanks to the Lilly Endowment grant we are able to offer these seminars for three years, but we hope that others will see the value of this work and want to support something similar.

As part of their final project students receive \$300 toward their vocational goals and asked to complete a 500-800 word essay. Here are some selections from a few of the students in each of last year's tracks:

MY PERSPECTIVE on what it means to apply my faith to working in a largely secular world has changed immensely over the course of this past school year. In my own church background, I had seen many examples of people giving up their originally intended careers to go into ministry full-time at a church. However, these churches had shown me very few examples of men and women who served God while still achieving great things in a secular work environment...

During our meetings over the past two semesters, Phoebe and Richard Miles introduced our class to several people, including themselves, who are serving God while also serving the needs of the Gainesville community through their businesses....

FAITH AND VOCATION 2015-2016 Seminar Tracks:

- Christian Ministries
- Engineering and Technology
- Medicine and Health
- Entrepreneurship
- Counseling, Psychology and Human Services
- Primary and Secondary Education
- None of the above

This course provided me with examples of the great things people can do for God's glory through their work and gave me readings describing how I can do the same. With this newly acquired perspective, and a little encouragement, I was recognized for my hard work in the Arab Students' Association at UF and have recently been elected to serve as the President of the organization in my senior year here. This is something I had never dreamed that I would even want, much less achieve, but I am

excited to be serving as President of this organization which attracts so much of the Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim communities at UF and I am clinging to God to show me how to love and minister to the members of this organization that has come to mean so much to me.

— Amanda, Creating Wealth and Entrepreneurship Track

I FEEL CALLED TO BE A PASTOR, and though I never would have said something like this aloud, I have been tempted over the years to view pastoral ministry as inherently superior to other kinds of work. However, I know now that no work is a higher calling- that the highest calling on each person's life is nothing other than the calling that God has given them...

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Through the seminar, I have come to see the doctrine of vocation as central to the work of (the) kingdom of God. I have learned that the primary way in which we love God and neighbor is through our vocation. In our vocation, we submit to God's call on our life and seek to work alongside him in his work as Creator, Redeemer, or Restorer. God, in turn, uses our vocational obedience for the good of our neighbor.... God uses our work to promote the common good.

— Ethan, Christian Ministries Track

TWO LESSONS IN PARTICULAR have transformed the way I view work and my knowledge of the type of God we serve. The first lesson is that we were in fact created to work... The work that we do is an act of worship to our Heavenly Father... No work is meaningless.... The second lesson I learned tied everything together, giving me a biblical understanding of work. This is it: I had to abandon ship, all my life I had believed in what Paul Marshall calls the 'life-boat theology'. Our God doesn't want to just save his people, but his good world as well. I had always believed that our efforts in saving this sin ravaged world was pointless. This erroneous thinking did not allow me to have a full understanding of work. There will be a day when heaven and earth will unite. The work that people before us have done has not been meaningless and neither is ours. As we represent our Creator through the work that we do, we work together with Him to slowly redeem this sin ravaged earth, until the glorious day in which He will finish it all.

— Lithza, Help! Track

I THINK MY UNDERSTANDING OF WORK was more realistically limited to considering the minimum effort needed to get through each semester of school.... Honestly, I think I avoided considering how faith should inform my thoughts on vocation, because in the past, my brief reflections had led me to erroneously assume that a follower of Christ had an obligation to pursue a career path directly involved with serving others in some sort of ministry capacity- something I would not be doing as a physicist...

In my seminar track, we spent much of the first few meetings discussing how the Bible depicts work as having inherent value beyond whatever personal or societal need it fills...

As the year progressed, the Lord began teaching me how to find joy and fulfillment in the actual work I was doing. For instance, I see very tangible differences in the way I approach my coursework- I spent extra hours meeting with my professors to gain a deeper understanding of what I was learning, and even found myself researching

additional material beyond the scope of my courses... I am extremely thankful for how the Lord has used my year in this program....

— Scott, Engineering and Technology Track

IT HAD TO BE SOMETIME near the end of April 2014. If you had decided to walk through Library West, at the University of Florida, it would have been quite likely that you would have seen me.... a young man furiously reading through pages of notes over and over again. You probably would have seen a young man with blood shot eyes. You probably would have seen a young man with cans of Red Bull and junk food scattered about his desk... I was a young man to whom work had become God.

Fast forward to today. So much has changed in the past year of my life, and so much growth has taken place in the area of vocational thinking... If we had met one year ago and you had asked me, "Derek, why do you work?" I may have responded, "I work to make money so that I can support myself," or "I work because my parents told me to do so," or "I work so that I can get the job that I want." While there really is no wrong answer to this question, I believe my answer from one year ago may have lacked a backing by scripture. Today if you were to ask me the same question I would respond with a quote from the first chapter of *Work Matters* by Tom Nelson. It goes like this, "Because God himself is a worker, and because we are his image-bearers, we were designed to reflect who God is in, through, and by our work. The work we are called to do every day is an important part of our image-bearing nature and stewardship. As human beings we were created to do things. In this sense we are not only human beings, we are also human doings. We have been created to contribute to God's good world."* This quote is backed up by scripture in Genesis 1:26-28.

Furthermore, as I hoped to illustrate above, I lacked the discipline to rest in my work. If we were truly designed to reflect who God is, and I believe we were, then we were not created to work all-day-every-day as I was doing. Even God himself rested on the seventh day and hallowed it (Genesis 2:3).

During the evaluation session I wrote, "Taking this class was one of the best decisions that I have made in college," and I really meant it.... I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who made this class possible.

— Derek, Medicine and Health Track

* Tom Nelson, *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 24-25.

NEWS & NOTES

MADE TO WORK, MADE TO WORSHIP: 2015 SUMMER INSTITUTE ON FAITH AND VOCATION was a rousing success. James K.A. Smith, Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College and Editor of *Comment* magazine, led a series of lectures and discussion incorporating biblical wisdom and contemporary scholarship focused on how what we do shapes who we are. We were delighted to see the many alumni who came back for the weekend. If you couldn't attend podcasts are available on our website and via iTunes. Out of conversations related to the conference two reading group discussions are being hosted by Ryan Fields and Chris Musgrove: **"Being the Church in a Secular Age" Tuesday, October 13, 1:00 p.m. -2:15 p.m.** and **"If 'you are what you love,' then'.... Tuesday, November 10, 1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.**

PASCAL AND THE (POST) MODERN Both the Director's class and the Friday reading group will be discussing Dr. Horner's unpublished draft manuscript on Pascal. Chapters include *The Cultural Logic of Modernity*," *"Two Cheers for Richard Rorty*," and *"Blaise Pascal in the Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*."

DR. BRENT HENDERSON will be presenting **"Some Prolegomena to a Theology of Language"** on November 20 at 12:45 p.m. -2:00 p.m. . He is also leading a graduate student group on Faith and Vocation in the Academy.

PASCAL'S has said farewell to several beloved baristas: Allie Huggins, Kelly Arahill, Todd Lowen and Will Deyo. But it is not always goodbye. On June 20, Kelly married Juan Alcala, who has returned to be our manager after a year at the Trinity Forum.



New baristas Cassidy Sizemore, Ethan Brown, Honesty Abramowich, Rachel Hart and Stephanie Diaz join Amy Clear, Caroline Hament, and Scott Trinkle at Pascal's coffeehouse.

ESSAY CONTEST FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:

THINKING ABOUT WORK IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The Study Center invites students to submit essays in response to the question:

What contemporary challenges most impact the work you anticipate doing in coming years, and how might biblically sound, theological reflection frame that work in our current cultural setting?

First place award is \$1,000.

Second place is \$700.

Deadline is January 15, 2016. Visit our website for more details.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Readings in Faith and Culture

Tuesdays, Oct. 13 and Nov. 20, 1:00-2:15 p.m.

Director's Class: Pascal and the (Post)Modern

Wednesdays, Sept. 16 - Oct. 28, 11:45 a.m - 12:35 p.m.

Works in Progress: Pascal and the (Post)Modern

Fridays, Sept. 18, Oct. 9, Oct. 30, 12:45p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

As always, we thank you for your interest and support. We wouldn't be here without you! And remember the website is the best place to keep up to date: christianstudycenter.org

This newsletter is a publication of the Christian Study Center of Gainesville which facilitates the thoughtful consideration of a Christian understanding of life and culture in the university community.



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