

A VISIONARY JOURNEY: *Faith and Work from UF to Dubai*

We are pleased to introduce our readers to Matt Nobles, alumnus and long-time friend of the Study Center, who is the initiator and sponsor of this year's wonderfully successful essay contest for undergraduates, "Thinking About Work in the Twenty-First Century." Matt first proposed this idea a few years ago, and we are so glad he stayed with it. We have been very encouraged by the many fine essays that students submitted. Thank you, Matt, for this great service to the Study Center and to the students whom we serve.

First of all, tell us a bit about yourself, your time at the University of Florida (UF), and your life now:

I'm fortunate enough to have spent five incredible years as a UF student, while studying finance in the business school, among other things. I took a "victory lap" and stuck around for an extra fifth year, just because I was having way too much fun taking advantage of the incredible experiences UF undergrads have available to them, which certainly include the CSC.

Since graduating, I've been working for General Electric (GE) in various finance training programs and full-time positions. I currently live abroad in Dubai, UAE, where I've lived for the past four years and have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to learn how business (and life) is conducted outside the US. Gainesville will always be home, but the world is ripe for exploring!

I've also been beyond blessed with a growing family, which includes my amazing wife, Kelly, and my new daughter, Eva Grace, who is just five months old. Becoming a husband and now a father has been the most important and wonderful journey I've ever been on, and I thank God everyday for the opportunity to love, serve and lead my family.



As a student, how did you first learn about the Study Center, and what is most memorable about your interactions with the CSC?

I honestly can't remember how I heard about the CSC in the fall of my freshman year. It may have been a flier or a friend, but somehow I found myself sitting upstairs eating pizza and listening to Richard and others expound on the fall of man in Genesis 3 and how that reality plays out in our own lives.

The approach to thinking about the text and its implications were unlike anything I had ever heard in Sunday school or from the pulpit. That night upstairs, I came to understand that good Christians can ask thoughtful questions about our faith, our God, and the world around us, and, furthermore, that we shouldn't be afraid of equally thoughtful reflections and critiques of our previously held perspectives. When I reflect on my experiences at the CSC, I have warm memories of genuine and thoughtful friendships developing and paradigm-shifting conversations taking place, all in the context of a casual comfortable environment which provided the space for these interactions.

Please share some of your understanding of faith and vocation with our readers:

As I was graduating, I faced the difficult decision of selecting between two very different first job options, which would have likely set me down very distinct career trajectories. The first was to join Teach For America and work as a high school math teacher in an inner-city school in Houston. The second was to join the Financial Management Program with General Electric. After thinking and praying long and hard about these options, I decided to put my degree in Finance to direct use in the world of Corporate America. Now, almost 10 years into my career, I've certainly had good and bad days, but by and large I'm confident that I've made the right choice for me.

Continued on page 2

A Visionary Journey continued from page 1

I have the good fortune to work at a company that makes some of the most important infrastructure equipment in the world...

When you flipped on a light switch today, there's a good chance that GE Power built the equipment which created the electricity you enjoy. When you chowed down on a great bowl of cereal, there's a good chance that GE Transportation built the locomotives which delivered the grain to your favorite breakfast packager. When you pump gas into your car, there's a good chance that GE Oil & Gas built much of the equipment involved in extracting, refining and delivering gas to the station so you can get to where you need to be. When you flew across the country to visit your loved ones for the holidays, there's a good chance that GE Aviation built the engines which kept you safely aloft to your destination. If you ever have to go to a hospital for critical and life-saving scans or medical procedures, there's a good chance that GE Healthcare built the equipment that the doctors rely on.

GE does all this and more, with a sterling reputation of integrity in their business dealings with customers, suppliers and the communities in which we operate.

So, yes, I do work for Corporate America in a desk job, and I do sometimes struggle with the profit motive and the singular focus on delivering positive financial returns to GE shareholders. But I'm grateful to have been blessed with the opportunity to apply my craft in a positive environment and for the chance to contribute to meeting many of the world's most critical needs through the products and services GE offers. I believe that I am doing the good work that I have learned to do and that God has set aside for me.

What motivated you to propose an essay contest for undergraduate students?

I believe that being able to think and communicate well is among the most essential and important skills that any person can have, regardless of their faith or chosen vocation. Within the world of business I am certain that the employees, who are able to synthesize ideas and communicate them clearly, so as to motivate action, are the ones who are frequently perceived to demonstrate 'leadership qualities' and are most quickly promoted. So thinking and writing is important, and should be practiced at every opportunity.

Secondly, I believe that the question we've posed about faith and work is important and worth careful consideration particularly by young undergraduates who may be just launching into their careers. What are the implications of the theological value of our work under the strains of contemporary culture and modern technology, and how shall we practically grapple with these challenges? The Teacher has told us that our work is 'good' ... well, is it? Will it be?!

What do you most want to see the Study Center doing in years to come?

I believe that the CSC is diligently doing important and life-changing work in the lives of anyone who is fortunate enough to walk through

the doors. I think that the CSC is a rather unique place where authentic discussions about science, the liberal arts, vocation, our daily lives, and how these issues intersect with our Christian faith take place. The CSC should recognize this uniqueness as a strength, and in the years to come, I hope and pray that God expands the vision for what is possible for the CSC to achieve. I don't imagine a shift, but rather an enlargement of what the CSC is already doing...

Could the CSC be *the* prominent voice on these issues? Could the CSC be a thought-leader on a national (or even global!) scale?

Professionally produced podcasts, a quarterly peer-reviewed Journal, several books, traveling speaking engagements within the spheres of academia and popular media outlets, a thriving community of alumni and fans engaged in discussion online and perhaps at a large annual conference, etc. Just imagine, this and more! I think it's possible, worthwhile, and that the CSC could, in fact, become a culture-shaping force in the years to come.

What role do you see for CSC alumni in the coming years?

There are several important things that alumni can do for the CSC...

GIVE: As you are able, give financially to support the CSC and the programs that they manage. It's important that the leadership doesn't spend their time focused on fundraising, so they can spend more time on raising thoughtful members of the Christian community.

MENTOR: Ask for opportunities to mentor a student at the CSC. As alumni, you have valuable experiences and insights that can be shared with students who are currently wrestling with tough questions about life, vocation, faith and more. You can be there for them.

STAY ENGAGED: Listen to every podcast you can get your hands on. Read every publication. Stay connected as much as you can. The work continues!

GET CREATIVE: If you have an idea then write it down, send it to the CSC leadership and don't be afraid to be persistent. I think it took me three years to get the CSC Essay competition up and running, but we're already seeing that it's been a tremendous success. So, get creative and see if there's a unique way that you could add value to the CSC experience!

CONNECT WITH US

 352-379-7375

 info@christianstudycenter.org

 christianstudycenter.org

 facebook.com/christianstudycenter

 youtube.com/cscgainesville

 twitter.com/cscgainesville

NEWS & NOTES

HELLOS AND GOODBYES: Long-time friend, supporter and program contributor, **Tim Schubert**, has joined the CSC Board of Directors. Thank you, Tim, for this new chapter of service.

We miss our departing board member, **Barry Curtis**, who served generously and ably for many years. He and his wife, Jennifer, moved to California for a new job.

Pascal's continues to thrive such that two new baristas have been hired, **Lauren Babb** and **Daniel Barr**. Juan is now managing ten baristas in addition to the coffeehouse work itself!

VOLUNTEER NEEDED: We still need a gardener! Anybody?? It really isn't a very big area, but just needs a little attention on your own time.

SPECIAL TRIBUTE GIFT: In honor of **Dr. Earl J. Claire's** 75th Birthday (2015) by Dan and Elise Claire, Mark and Catherine Larson, and David and Amy Claire

SPECIAL TRIBUTE GIFT: In honor of **Christopher Waugh** (December, 2015) by Brian Waugh

Did you know the CSC turns 15 this year?

Would you consider an extra \$15 in addition to your regular gifts this year for our 15th anniversary?

IT'S EASY TO GIVE ONLINE VIA EFT OR PAYPAL:

<http://christianstudycenter.org/about-us/donate/>
or mail a check to: 112 NW 16th St, Gainesville, FL 32603

Stock gifts are always welcome and easy to receive. Please notify us if you intend to give stock. And don't forget those employer-matching gifts. It's a great way to double your gift.

ESSAY CONTEST RESULTS:

THINKING ABOUT WORK IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

We extend our sincere thanks to each undergraduate who participated in the contest. The essays we received showed thoughtful consideration of faith, work, and culture. Our five judges carefully evaluated the essays (without knowledge of the authors' names), and agreed on the following winners:



FIRST PLACE: "The Trees Will Probably Clap Their Hands At This," by Caroline Hament

SECOND PLACE: "The Act of Choice, or, How To Decide What To Do With One's Whole Entire Life," by Scott Trinkle

Congratulations, Caroline and Scott! Look for both winning essays in our next edition of *Reconsiderations*.



112 NW 16th Street
Gainesville, FL 32603

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Interview with Matt Nobles
- News and Notes
- Essay Contest Results

UPCOMING EVENT: 15th Anniversary Celebration

- Friday, June 17, 2016
- Speaker: Karl Johnson of Chesterton House (Cornell University)
- Save the date and plan to join us!

SOME REASONS TO CELEBRATE:

- 15+ participants meet to discuss "Works in Progress" - new material from faculty and the CSC director incorporating Christian reflection and scholarly work
- 20+ students participate in the weekly director's lunch class receiving godly wisdom and cultural understanding
- 55 undergraduate and graduate students meet monthly for dinner with mentors in our faith and vocation program
- *"These faith and vocation seminars have made a real difference in the way I understand my work and the way I understand myself. I'm not the same. I see how God is a part of everything I am involved in and the work I do matters to him."*

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.



112 NW 16th Street
Gainesville, FL 32603

352 - 379 - 7375
christianstudycenter.org

Dr. Richard V. Horner
Executive Director

Laura Lynch
Newsletter Editor