

Christian Scholar Journey from Solitary to Civic Engagement Study

Introduction: Grad life can be extremely isolating with research, publishing, and family demands, barely getting past the many academic hurdles. It appears easy to focus on work in labs and libraries and ignore the colleagues God has called you to know and encourage. What does God ask of me?

I Cor 4:1, 2 The name given to each believer, whether in academia or industry, is a SERVANT and STEWARD.

What is the calling for each of these roles?

The researcher has a unique stewardship. What does it mean to you to be a steward of the MYSTERIES of God?

What does it mean to be found FAITHFUL?

How can we SERVE peers and STEWARD MYSTERIES while completing our degree?

Acts 6:1-6 Tells of first century struggles of the early church and the calling of Apostles to do their work and allow others to handle the challenge. What were the qualifications for selection?

Whether in your department or Fellowship, what would it take for you to be available and visible to serve?

What is the result of this engagement? Can you surrender daily to the Spirit for power and wisdom to serve?

Rom 12:1, 2 What principles do you see as key to a scholars' calling to live rightly in society?

Salvation is by grace alone. The Christian life is lived in daily surrender to the Spirit for power. What is meant by "presenting our bodies as living sacrifices?" While a Lordship decision is not a requirement for salvation, it is a reasonable form of worship? What does a Lordship decision mean to you as a scholar?

You may have come to the Christian Grad Fellowship for support and encouragement but our calling is to be prepared for our future calling. This includes learning how to live in a society with rules and demands.

Rom 13:1, 2 What responsibilities are stated or assumed in the command to live rightly in society?

We believe that every grad group or extended community needs several priorities from us to function well together. We need to bring our gifts to the group, church and society because the task requires each of us to engage. Our fight is not against flesh and blood so we must "put on the full armor of God" and become to our colleagues Shepherds, Warriors and Diagnosticians in order to ensure that others are connected, equipped and being brought into fullness of Christ. If called to a leadership role in CGF will you be filled and available?

Aristotle describes human beings as ‘political animals’. This means that it is natural, in a sense, for us to form various kinds of associations, from the nuclear family up to the state. We form these associations, not only because they are needed to meet our non-social needs (e.g., our needs for food, shelter, and protection) but also for their own sakes, because our God-given human nature (in the image of the Divine Trinity) craves fellowship. Indeed my individual happiness is inextricably tied up with the flourishing of my family, my local community, and my country. The quality of our individual lives, in other words, depends intrinsically on the quality of our communal life and the quality of communal life is called ‘the common good’. The common good is not the sum of our individual goods but the indivisible goods of community in which we all share: a well-ordered, reasonable, beautiful, and just society.

Our human communities are themselves images of the Church, the Kingdom of God, which the apostle Paul compares to a living body (I Corinthians 12). Just as different parts of the body have different natural functions, so different members of a flourishing society play different, complementary roles. Among these are the roles of teacher, scholar, and scientist. As such, we are members of various associations, including departments, institutes, colleges, and universities. But, in addition to all these, we are citizens of a common political order. In light of this we ought to consider the question: “What are the special responsibilities that we as scholars and scientists bear to our larger political community?”

We can divide these responsibilities into two parts: our responsibility for shaping the next generation, and our responsibility to add our voice to the public deliberations of our day. Let’s consider the second of these parts first. This role is sometimes called that of “the public intellectual.” A better (but wordier) label would be: *a provider of special intellectual service to the public*. In a sense, every citizen should be a public intellectual, in the sense that each of us should give our communities the benefits of our own judgment and understanding, but those of us who are scholars and scientists have acquired special gifts and capacities in respect of particular fields and sciences, and so we have a special responsibility to enable our fellow citizens the full benefit of gifts and capacities.

This is a weighty responsibility, because it brings with it a degree of power and influence which is easily abused. As individual human beings, we have particular interests, commitments, and connections, all of which can bias us in public deliberations, causing us to promote private or factional goods over the common good. When we speak for a branch of science or scholarship, we must take care to speak only as our specialized knowledge and craft directs us, not confusing our expertise with our private judgment. In particular, we must clearly distinguish between speaking as a scientist and speaking as an advocate for particular scientific projects and institutions. When we claim the authority of Science or Scholarship for our public pronouncements, our

fellow citizens are naturally inclined to defer to our greater expertise, and this is a trust that we must constantly earn and re-earn.

As Christian scholars and scientists, we benefit from the inspired teaching of the Word, enabling us to recognize the claim that “the least of these” have upon us. The Word provides us with moral and political absolutes that endure from age to age, beyond the oscillations of fashion and party. We Christian scholars and scientists can, therefore, speak with added confidence about the issues of the day, seeing them both from the perspective of our special science and from God’s own viewpoint. It is therefore especially incumbent upon us to speak out against evil and injustice, even when (and especially when) doing so is unpopular, both in the wider society and in our ivory towers. We must, therefore, be especially well-informed about the political actions and policies of our day and especially thoughtful about their moral and spiritual status. We must think both scientifically and Christianly about such matters, with science and the Christian faith both informing and aiding the other.

Let’s turn to that other area of responsibility: that of shaping men and women of the next generation to be good citizens of our political community. Of course, it is right and proper for biologists to train others to become biologists, legal scholars lawyers, philosophers as excellent philosophers, and so on. But we cannot avoid shaping our students to be citizens of a certain kind, either for good or ill. We must, for example, teach them about the responsibilities of properly rendering intellectual service to the public, as I described above. We can also model good citizenship for them in our actions as members and directors of academic institutions, ensuring that those institutions operate in a fair, open, and life-affirming way. Finally, we can encourage them to think about their own research questions, projects, and careers from the perspective of the common good: what future knowledge would best enable human beings to realize more perfectly the divine image in this life?

Jesus tells us to ‘render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and unto God what is God’s’ (Mark 12:17). The second of these is of course of supreme or ultimate importance, but this does not give us license to ignore the first. God has created the legal and political sphere as His “minister” (Romans 13:4), and so it behooves us as scholars, scientists, and teachers to give special attention to our civic responsibilities, both as public intellectuals and as shapers of the citizens of the future.