



# Towers

A NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

07

VOLUME 12  
MARCH  
2014

HOW  
TO HAVE

*A RICH* SEMINARY  
JOURNEY

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STUDY ISLAM

MOHLER TALKS  
INERRANCY

THREE QUESTIONS  
WITH NANCY PEARCEY





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March 2014, Vol. 12, No. 7.  
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## 12 How to have a rich seminary journey

Seminary is a long journey, and it can be grueling. In order to encourage students along the way, the *Towers* team gathers wisdom about traveling the journey well from voices around the seminary.



**From the editor:**

Our time in seminary is a wobbly balance between study and, well, everything else. I often meet students who are exhausted and weary, and they can't seem to see

any light at the end of the academic tunnel, while others struggle to prioritize work responsibilities and family needs with the pressures and demands of the classroom.

So in this *Towers* we've collected wisdom from pastors and professors around the seminary to encourage you through the long journey of studying here. We've included insights from John Piper on how to worship God by studying theology, highlights from a recent panel discussion about how seminarians can best

participate in their local churches and a reflection on how C.S. Lewis teaches us to prioritize our work.

Also in this issue, R. Albert Mohler Jr. discusses his contribution to a new book about biblical inerrancy and explains why the doctrine matters.

And in our Three Questions column this month, Nancy Pearcey, author of the widely popular books *Total Truth* and *Saving Leonardo*, discusses holiness in engaging with arts and entertainment in the culture.

**- 08 -**

**A modern definition of biblical inerrancy**

Seminary president R. Albert Mohler Jr. talks about his new book, *Five Views of Biblical Inerrancy* with Matt Damico.

**- 21 -**

**The corollary between the mind and mouth**

The March Southern Story column features professor Rob Plummer.

**- 23 -**

**Seen at Southern**

Staff photographer Emil Handke captured the highlights of Southern Seminary's recent Great Commission Week.

**- 24 -**

**Seminary dedicates a new academic center to study Islam**

Southern Seminary unveils its new Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam.

**- 28 -**

**Three questions with Nancy Pearcey**

Author and speaker Nancy Pearcey talks about Christian holiness and the arts.

Our mission is to use our time, resources and talents to tell the Southern story in an accurate, timely and creative manner to the glory of God.

# Newslog



## Students encouraged to ‘count the cost’ during Great Commission Week

By RuthAnne Irvin and Noah Wright

Southern Seminary’s annual Great Commission Week encouraged students to “count the cost” of missions and ministry during the four-day event, Feb. 10-13.

Aaron Harvie, church planting mobilization strategist with NAMB and instructor of church planting, preached in Tuesday’s chapel from the first chapter of Joshua, encouraging those who feel ill-equipped to fulfill the Great Commission.

This year’s Great Commission Week included afternoon “excursions” to local ministries in Louisville, Ky. Students visited the University of Louisville’s Baptist Campus Ministry, New Breed Church, Scarlet Hope, Jefferson Street Baptist Center and Refuge Louisville.

In addition to these discussions and excursions, the women’s fellowship, Koinonia, made gift bags for Scarlet Hope, a ministry to women caught in the sex industry.

To conclude the week, seminary president R. Albert Mohler Jr. introduced the new Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam during chapel. The center’s dedication followed the service with a meet-and-greet with donors.

Audio and video from chapel services are available at [sbts.edu/resources](http://sbts.edu/resources).

*PHOTO: Students visit with local ethnic store owner at an “excursion” during Great Commission Week.*

## Work, economics initiative at Southern Seminary receives grant

By James A. Smith Sr.

A new academic initiative at Southern Seminary to foster a theology of work and economics among students and faculty received a major grant from the Kern Family Foundation, seminary officials announced recently.

The initiative will sponsor conferences, workshops, faculty retreats and discussion groups “aimed at equipping students to understand some basic principles of economics, business and entrepreneurship, the biblical and theological principles that ground and shape a theology of work and how the intersection of faith, work and economics relates to ministry in the church and through the church to the community,” Kenneth Magnuson, director of the initiative and professor of Christian ethics at Southern explained.

Faculty, students, pastors and denominational and business leaders are projected participants in the initiative’s activities and programs.

The Kern Family Foundation, based in Wisconsin, established the Oikonomia Network in 2009 to support through grants “theological education in the area of work and economics,” according to the foundation’s website.

The initiative is a program of Southern Seminary’s

Carl F.H. Henry Institute for Cultural Engagement.

The Henry Institute will work in partnership with the newly announced Center for Gospel and Culture at Boyce College, the undergraduate school of the seminary. The leader of the Boyce center is New Testament scholar and ethicist Denny Burk. The center represents an effort to bring together energy and expertise into one focus that will serve the college’s students and the churches they represent.

David Kotter, a New Testament doctor of philosophy student at Southern who has extensive background in business in America and Europe with Ford Motor Company, is the associate director of the initiative. Kotter is also a senior research fellow for the Institute for Faith, Work and Economics in Washington, D.C., and teaches business, entrepreneurship and economics at Indiana Wesleyan University.

Kotter spoke at the first event of the initiative, a Feb. 26 “Faith@Work” lunch talk, “What Every Pastor Needs to Know About Economics,” for doctoral students, faculty and of master of divinity students.

*Aaron Cline Hanbury contributed to this report.*

## Mohler responds to Kentucky gay marriage ruling

By James A. Smith Sr.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, posted an essay to his website, [www.AlbertMohler.com](http://www.AlbertMohler.com), in response to the Feb. 12 ruling by Federal District Judge John G. Heyburn declaring unconstitutional parts of Kentucky’s ban on gay marriages. The following is an excerpt:

“Christians who affirm the biblical understanding of marriage as the union of a man and woman must now recognize that we can no longer count upon the government and its laws to reflect that understanding. Even the proponents of same-sex marriage must surely recognize the radical legal and moral shift in Western civilization and human history this change implies. Christians understand that marriage is one of God’s greatest

gifts to humanity and that marriage, as defined by the Creator, is fundamental to human flourishing.

“We now know that the government cannot be counted on to affirm this message. As a matter of fact, we have to face the reality that the government — even in the Commonwealth of Kentucky — may teach a radically different message through its laws. But the real question for Christians is not whether the government gets the question of marriage right, but if we do. In the grand scheme of things, that is the church’s real challenge.”

Mohler’s entire essay — “The Other Shoe Drops in Kentucky: Federal Court Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage in the Commonwealth” — is available at his website.

## Mohler begins new Q&A podcast: 'Ask Anything: Weekend Edition'

By James A. Smith Sr.

"Ask Anything: Weekend Edition," a new weekly segment of R. Albert Mohler Jr.'s "The Briefing" podcast, launched Sat., Feb. 1, bringing back a popular feature of the former "The Albert Mohler Program" radio show that allowed listeners to pose questions to the theologian, author and broadcaster.

"Ever since the end of the Albert Mohler program, I've received many requests for a return to something like 'Ask Anything Wednesday,'" said Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The "Ask Anything Wednesday" feature was held each week during Mohler's former daily, live radio show, which aired nationally 2004-2010 over the Salem Radio Network. He discontinued the radio show in 2010 to begin "The Briefing" podcast, a daily analysis of news and events from a Christian worldview.

Mohler noted the callers' questions on "Ask Anything Wednesday" were wide-ranging and "it was a lot of fun." Although "The Briefing" podcast — together with his in-

terview podcast, "Thinking in Public" — "serves our constituency better" than live radio, "I missed 'Ask Anything Wednesday,'" Mohler said.

"I am looking forward to doing 'Ask Anything: Weekend Edition,' and I am looking forward to the questions," he said after recording the first episode in which he answered questions about "word of faith" teaching, social media obsession, dating denominationally, surrogacy and the doctrine of election.

Each Saturday, Mohler will answer questions posed by listeners who call (877)-505-2058 to record queries about theology, the Bible or current events. Each episode is expected to air three to six questions from listeners, and will total about 18 minutes in length, which is comparable to the length of "The Briefing." Subscribers to "The Briefing" will automatically get "Ask Anything: Weekend Edition." Mohler's podcasts are available via iTunes, RSS feed and e-mail.

Mohler's other podcast, "Thinking in Public," features



occasional interviews with leading intellectual figures in the fields of theology, history, politics and culture. Guests have included former president Jimmy Carter, professor Harvey Mansfield and author Charles Murray.

Mohler's podcasts are available on his website, [www.AlbertMohler.com](http://www.AlbertMohler.com).

## In discussion of 'faith and freedom,' Mohler declares 'cultural Christianity is dead'

By Aaron Cline Hanbury

While "cultural Christianity is dead" in an increasingly secular America, evangelicals own the "theological resources" to keep the faith, R. Albert Mohler Jr. said during a public discussion about faith and politics last month.

Mohler, the president of Southern Seminary, joined nationally syndicated radio show host and conservative pundit Dennis Prager and *The New York Times* columnist Ross

Douthat for the event, "Faith and Freedom in the Public Square," Jan. 28. The trio of public intellectuals engaged in a frank, wide-ranging and often entertaining two-hour discussion of secularism and shifting morality in America.

Douthat, a Roman Catholic whose 2013 book about religion in the United States, *Bad Religion*, received wide acclaim and appeared on *The New York Times*' bestsellers

list, opened the evening with a "view from Washington." He offered a "distillation" of the socio-religious environment — the cultural conversation on issues such as religious liberty and faith and politics — in the nation's capital.

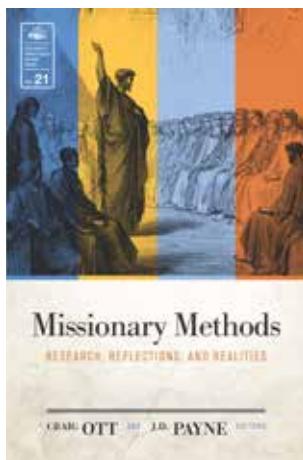
After the three conversation partners offered their surveys of the contemporary American religious landscape, Douthat posed a question about the declining number of "religious persons" in the United States.

After nearly two hours of conversation that covered topics from civil rights to party platforms, the three men received questions from the audience. Questions and answers ranged from the "loss of God" in public discourse to conservative involvement in pop culture, from the so-called cultural "war on men" to same-sex marriage.

The event emcee was Warren Cole Smith, associate publisher and vice president of *WORLD* magazine, who introduced the panelists and moderated the question and answer portion of the evening. *WORLD*, the largest Christian news magazine in the United States, co-sponsored the event with Hashtag Productions.



# Book Reviews



(William Carey Library 2013, \$14.99)

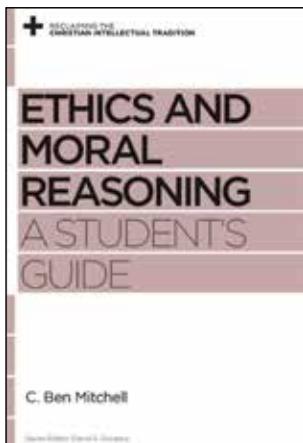
## **Missionary Methods: Research, Reflection, and Realities**

Craig Ott and J. D. Payne Review by Daniel Ryan

For many, a mention of Roland Allen might conjure up, well, nothing. Quick recap: Allen lived and wrote in the early twentieth-century, and spoke out for indigenous church planting during a time of strong colonialism, grounding his work in the life and ministry of Paul. Allen is the inspiration for this book as the contributors try to wrestle with the intersection of theology and practice.

The first half of the book analyzes context and presuppositions for developing practices. It also discusses both the role of the Spirit and the incarnation for missions and theology. The second half covers a broader range of topics, all related to methodology. This includes everything from orality to church reproduction, preaching to self-identification and spiritual warfare.

There is great content in this book for all walks of ministry life.



(Crossway 2013, \$11.99)

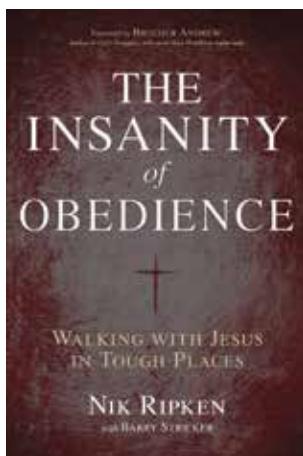
## **Ethics and Moral Reasoning: A Student's Guide**

C. Ben Mitchell Review by Matt Damico

This short volume in Crossway's series, Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition, "is a guide to thinking about the good," writes author C. Ben Mitchell.

The book begins by addressing the challenges of relativism. After that are two chapters reviewing the history of moral reasoning, specifically the continuing influence of both the Old and New Testaments in the Western world. Chapters four and five survey the thought of Enlightenment ethicists, such as Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, and important evangelical ethicists, such as John Murray and Carl F.H. Henry. The final chapter presents a rubric for using the Bible for ethical decision making.

Anyone looking for an introduction into the history, the goals and the different schools of ethical thought, this book will play the part well.



(B&H Books 2014, \$15.99)

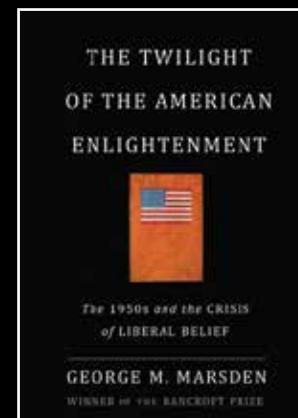
## **The Insanity of Obedience: Walking with Jesus in Tough Places**

Nik Ripken with Barry Stricker Review by Daniel Ryan

There are few books that teach ministry models, reveal blind spots in the church and make you cry your eyes out. However, Nik Ripken has done just this in *The Insanity of Obedience*. But he has not done this for effect. In fact, it is just the opposite. He writes with a lifetime of research and personal experience with the persecuted church.

He writes about topics like being God's people on mission, faith in the midst of persecution and persecutors, "how faith grows" and spreads in difficult areas, necessary spiritual and ministry practices for leaders and what it means to walk in victory with a risen Savior.

Concerning the audience for this book, as Ripken says, "If you are determined to be defined by the Resurrection, read on."



## **The Twilight of the American Enlightenment: The 1950s and the Crisis of Liberal Belief**

by George M. Marsden

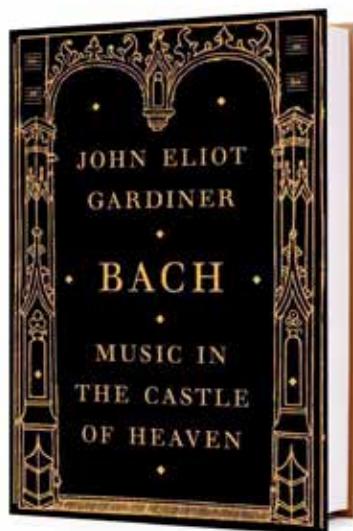
(Basic Books 2014, \$26.99)

*"This is a book worth reading. Some of the secular response has been that it is too much of a warm-hearted recollection. I don't think that's what Marsden is trying to do. He was a young man and a college student in the 1950s, and when he came to his own intellectual understanding, this was the public conversation going on. That's the same reason why I found the book so indispensable, because we're still talking about these issues and still in the midst of the cultural and intellectual crisis that he so well documents from the 1950s."*

### **R. Albert Mohler Jr.**

President and Joseph Emerson Brown Professor of Christian Theology of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary





### *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*

John Eliot Gardiner

Review by Aaron Cline Hanbury

**E**ighteenth century composer Johann Sebastian Bach, despite producing an abundance of musical works, left behind little about his personal life. And what he did leave — only a few letters and a complaint to municipal authorities — often paints a picture of him as “disappointingly ordinary” and “something of a bore.”

“We yearn to know what kind of per-

son was capable of composing music so complete that it leaves us completely mystified, then at other moments so irresistibly rhythmic that we want to get up and dance to it, and then at others still so full of poignant emotion that we are moved to the very core of our beings,” writes John Eliot Gardiner in his new biography of Bach.

In *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*, Gardiner, a conductor and founder of the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra, looks at Bach’s life not from the fragments he left, but from the abundance. By studying Bach’s music — and his “act

of music making” — he presents “one person’s vision” of the lauded composer by looking at Bach’s life by experiencing his works.

“By looking at the twin processes of composing and performing Bach’s music, we can put the human likeness of the composer himself into relief — an impression that can only be strengthened by the experience of re-creating and re-performing it now.”

In Gardiner’s vision, “Bach was not a bore.” Far from it, “It is Bach, making music in the Castle of Heaven, who gives us the voice of God — in human form.”

### *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*

J. Merrick, Stephen M. Garrett and Stanley N. Gundry, eds.

Review by Matt Damico

**E**ver since Jesus said Scripture cannot be broken, and Paul said the Scriptures are “God-breathed,” the Christian church has believed the Bible to be more than mere historical record or an ancient collection of writings from different cultures and eras. There has been less consensus, though, about the best way to describe and define the truthfulness of Scripture.

Zondervan’s recent book, *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, addresses the question of the “doctrinal rationale ... and Scriptural warrant” of the term “inerrancy” as a means of defining the Bible’s truthfulness.

*Christians who want to affirm, with Jesus, that “thy word is truth,” should seek to articulate the Bible’s truthfulness in the most robust and unashamed terms possible.*

The book’s contributors are R. Albert Mohler Jr., Peter Enns, Michael F. Bird, Kevin J. Vanhoozer and John R. Franke. The assignment for each contributor was to discuss inerrancy — along with corollary topics like the doctrine of inspiration and the nature of truth — in direct refer-

ence to the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI).

The first chapter is Mohler’s defense of classic inerrancy, in which he claims that “when the Bible speaks, God speaks.” His view “flows from three major sources — the Bible itself, the tradition of the church and the function of the Bible within the church.” Mohler argues not only for the validity of inerrancy — particularly as the CSBI articulates it — but that “the affirmation of the Bible’s inerrancy has never been more essential to evangelicalism.”

Enns writes the second chapter, in which he argues that inerrancy does not “capture the Bible’s varied character and complex dynamics,” and that “inerrancy sells God short.” From this follows his view that the CSBI obstructs “critical dialogue” within evangelicalism. Instead, Enns advocates for an “incarnational model of Scripture” that

views Scripture as “a collection of a variety of writings that ... reflects the worlds in which those writings were produced.”

The book’s third chapter comes from Bird. He aims to “modestly articulate a view of the veracity of Scripture that is genetically independent of the American

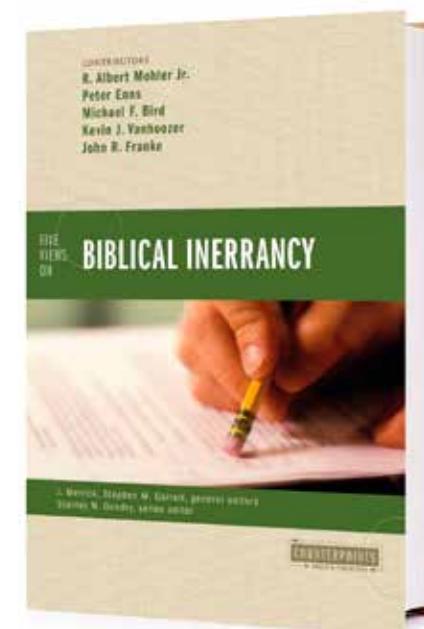
inerrancy tradition.” He is appreciative of the CSBI, but has significant hesitations regarding its so-called “hermeneutical assumptions,” and the lack of global representation among its framers. Bird argues for a more international view of Scripture that affirms its infallibility and is less exclusive than inerrancy.

Vanhoozer, in the fourth chapter, argues for a “well-versed” or “Augustinian” inerrancy that recognizes Scripture as “comprised of language and literature” and asks of the text, “what is the author doing in his discourse, and what is the discourse about?” While he has some reservations about the CSBI, Vanhoozer is largely appreciative.

The last chapter comes from Franke, who thinks inerrancy is an unhelpful way to articulate “the core idea of the authority of Scripture as a witness to the mission of God.” Regarding the CSBI, Franke deems it “doubtful that any ... early Christian leaders would affirm the details of inerrancy as they have come to be articulated in the Chicago statement.” Franke posits a “fallibilist perspective” on inerrancy that is “wed to the plurality of truth.”

The difference between the book’s contributors is not whether they believe the Bible is true, but what they mean by affirming the Bible’s truthfulness, the relationship between truth and history and the best way to articulate and define the truth status of Scripture. Some contrib-

utors make their case more convincingly than others, and some affirm the Bible’s truthfulness with significant qualifications or, perhaps more accurately, significant redefinitions. Christians who want to affirm, with Jesus, that “thy word is truth,” should seek to articulate the Bible’s truthfulness in the most robust and unashamed terms possible. Reading *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* can be instructive, by way of both positive and negative example, for how to do that well. (Zondervan 2013, \$19.99)





## Inerrancy: a modern definition of an historic view

### R. ALBERT MOHLER JR. DISCUSSES *FIVE VIEWS ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY*

By Matt Damico

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Below, R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Joseph Emerson Brown Professor of Christian Theology, discusses the new book, Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy, to which he contributed, with Towers book review editor Matt Damico.*

#### **MD: Why is this book necessary?**

**RAM:** Well, on the one hand, it's necessary because the issue of inerrancy is never a settled issue; it's never going to go away. It comes part-and-parcel with the modern world. Modernity itself presents a set of issues that are going to have to be answered one way or another. Thus, we'll land either in the affirmation of inerrancy or in some other place. I think inerrancy continues to be a defining issue for what evangelical integrity requires.

Also, there is utility in a five, or multiple-view book

like this. Zondervan's been doing this for some time, other publishers have had a similar format. I found, as a theology student when they first started coming out, that these were very helpful ways to get at issues, some better than others. I do not believe this one accomplished all that I had hoped it would accomplish, by means of having multiple views, but I still think it's good to have a debate in a book.

I knew, when I took this assignment, that I would be the "heavy." I knew that up front, so I knew that most reviewers of this book from some evangelical circles would be quite critical. I knew that when I took up the responsibility because they're already critical of the Chicago Statement [on Biblical Inerrancy].

Also, I fault several of my co-authors for failing actually to deal with what the book was supposed to be about, and that is the Chicago Statement. Some

of them, quite cleverly, avoided actually dealing with some of the issues that the book was supposed to be about. So, with every one of these projects, there are satisfactions and frustrations, but I hope this serves the cause of Christ and the church well, and I still very much want people to read it.

#### **MD: What do you mean when you use the term "inerrancy"?**

**RAM:** Vocabulary is always a problem. That's true in international diplomacy; it's true in labor contracts; it's true in the making of legislation; and it's true in theology as well. That's why, for instance, the Chicago Statement emerged in the 1970's at a specific moment when definition was badly needed.

This book is not just about inerrancy; it is specifically addressed to the Chicago Statement and revisiting that

question. I believe the Chicago Statement very accurately described inerrancy. There are new issues to be addressed, but I would not take away anything the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy achieved with that.

**MD: Some people accuse the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy of being too modernistic. How well do you think the Chicago Statement articulates the historic view of the church?**

**RAM:** This whole idea of it being modernistic is a canard; it's cute, but it's not all that meaningful. It is entirely true that the doctrine of inerrancy as it is described and defined in the Chicago Statement was not necessary until the advent of modernity. We should be unembarrassed by that.

In other words, there is no way to escape the modern age; we are chronological creatures, and here we are. Part of what it means in this generation to give a reason for the hope that is in us is to answer the questions that this age is asking, and in the modern age, questions about the veracity of divine revelation are inescapable. So, I'm not embarrassed at all to say that inerrancy is something that is found in the modern age in terms of its codification. I'm also quite bold to say that if you look at the history of the church, you will not find something less than an affirmation of inerrancy. You'll find the assumption of inerrancy.

When I teach historical theology and do a doctoral seminar on it, one of the main things I stress is that in all of theology there is a tension between what can be assumed and what must be articulated. At various points in church history and in various contexts, you could assume certain things, therefore they were not articulated.

That's the same reason why, for instance, the modern issues of sexuality require new confessional responses from the church. It's not that the church has changed its mind, much less innovated on the issue, but when the Baptist Faith and Message was passed in 1925 no one was talking about homosexuality as an open question; the same thing was even true in 1963. But in 2000, when the Southern Baptist Convention revised the Baptist Faith and Message, we had to talk about it because the age and the context demanded an answer. The same thing is true with inerrancy.

*There is no way to escape the modern age; we are chronological creatures, and here we are. Part of what it means in this generation to give a reason for the hope that is in us is to answer the questions that this age is asking, and in the modern age, questions about the veracity of divine revelation are inescapable.*

So, if the accusation is that inerrancy in its defined form in the Chicago Statement is intellectually situated in the modern world, we simply have to plead guilty because we also are intellectually situated in the modern world. The interesting thing is that the people who make that accusation are also living in the modern world. And thus, they also have to give some answer. So, if their answer isn't inerrancy, their answer is something else. If someone from the fifteenth century comes to interrogate me on inerrancy, I've got bigger problems than defining inerrancy. The people who are talking about inerrancy are twenty-first century people, who also have to deal with the same thing. So, it's an observation, but it's a canard. It's a way of distracting the conversation.

**MD: Some readers may be surprised to see you and Kevin Vanhoozer articulating different views in this book. Where do you differ?**

**RAM:** Well, that's a frustration to me in the sense that I'm not sure what the differences actually are. It seems to me that professor Vanhoozer wants to critique the Chicago Statement for failing to say some things that, upon reflection and reading, the Chicago Statement actually said. Perhaps they could have been said more clearly, perhaps they need to be said more loudly. But virtually all the qualifications he demands of the Chicago Statement are actually in the Chicago Statement.

One issue that becomes very interesting is where he wants to talk about a "nuanced" understanding of inerrancy or, basically, a more sophisticated understanding of inerrancy. The burden is then to demonstrate exactly how that differs from the Chicago Statement in any material sense. When we read, for instance, professor Vanhoozer's responses to the three problematic passages, it appears that he answers them more or less like someone who signed the Chicago Statement would answer them. [NOTE: each contributor was asked to address the historicity of Joshua 6, the apparent contradiction in Acts 9:7 and 22:9 and the theological differences in Deuteronomy 20:16-17 and Matthew 5:43-48.]

His recourse to speech-act theory is also very interesting. It's informative and it's hermeneutically helpful at certain points. But its actual relation to the inspiration of Scripture is extremely problematic because

we do not have the speech act, what we have is Scripture. It seems that the inevitable pattern this implies is something very akin to Barthian neo-orthodoxy, where revelation happens over here and you have the record of it in Scripture. Well, if you separate revela-

tion from the act to the record of Scripture, then the truth status of that written word becomes problematic over against the speech act. That's one problem.

The other thing is on questions of historicity. For instance, there were several who accused the Chicago Statement of prejudging issues as historical. Well, the statement's framers, some of whom I know quite well and personally, would come right back and say, "That's because Scripture quite straightforwardly establishes that right up front." In other words, it's clearly making a historical claim. And yet there is this attempt of some within evangelicalism to try to say, "This isn't making a historical claim," when it quite clearly is. So, you have proposals now which will go to one single chapter — for instance, the Licona move in Matthew — saying that one portion of the chapter is clearly making historical claims, but another is merely a literary device. [NOTE: Michael Licona, in his 2010 book *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*, questioned the historicity of the resurrection of the saints in Matthew 27.] That is exactly what the framers of the Chicago Statement sought to preclude.

I am not claiming infallibility for the statement made by the ICBI or its framers. But I do think what they did was a very significant and essential theological achievement. It can be built upon, but must not be dismissed or minimized in any way.

**MD: What's the importance of inerrancy for a pastor maintaining a robust pulpit ministry?**

**RAM:** It makes all the difference in the world. It may not appear at first that it necessarily would, because there are a lot of preachers in this day and age who reject the inerrancy of Scripture and still feel like they have something to say. No doubt, they still have something to say, but that's really not the issue. The issue is: what are we able to tell people the text of Scripture is and what is its demand upon us? The question is not whether the preacher has something to say, but whether God is going to say something through the preacher and through his Word. And, if the preacher has any question whatsoever about the truth status of the Word of God, it will inevitably shift to the preaching. The shift from "I'm going to preach the Word" to "I'm going to find something in this witness worthy of my attention and preaching."

The other move made by some is what I call "as if preaching: I'm going to preach this as if it is true," which is something those in the mainline Protestant churches came up with. But, you know, a congregation can quickly tell the difference between preaching something as true and preaching something as if this is true. And, at the end of the day, that makes all the difference in the world.



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HOW TO HAVE

*A RICH* SEMINARY  
JOURNEY



If seminarians will learn the habit of thinking about God's truth as a means of enjoying him, then they will not waste their theological education, said John Piper during a special, pre-convocation chapel service, Jan. 23, at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"God gave you doctrine for delight," he said in the beginning of his message. "God gave you a mind to be a faithful servant to your heart. Reasoning, thinking, knowing God is the necessary means, and delighting in, being satisfied in, enjoying and treasuring God is the ultimate end of the human soul."

Piper, popular author, speaker and founder of Desiring God ministries, preached from John 8:28-32, a sermon he called "Don't Waste Your Theological Education." In his message to a standing-room-only audience in Alumni Memorial Chapel, Piper applied the theme of his ministry, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him," to the pursuit of theological education.

Piper argued that because a Christian's mind is in service of his or her heart, theological studies should result in enjoyment of God — students should "make reflection the servant of affection," he said.

"The organ of knowing is given by God to serve the organ of preferring," Piper said. "Thinking exists to serve feeling."

According to Piper, the way those in seminary avoid wasting their experience is by using their academic pursuits both to further their knowledge of God and, ultimately, to enjoy him more.

"You will not waste your seminary — your years here, your efforts here, your experience — if you solidify the lifelong habit of thinking about the truth of God as a means of enjoying the God of truth," Piper said.

And, he said, Christians must do this for the rest of their lives.

Piper said that what keeps people — seminary students included — from enjoying God is competing affections. He stated that this displacement from affections for God to something else is sin. But the truth of God's Word will set Chris-

tians free from the bondage of sin.

"Sin is an internal displacement of the glory of God in our affections, in our valuing or treasuring of anything above God," Piper said. "All sin, outwardly, is an expression of the inward preference of anything above God. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free from preferring anything other than God," he said, encouraging students to know and prefer God above all other pursuits.

The season of seminary is for learning to think correctly about God, and God gave Christians doctrine for delight, he said, before he transitioned to instruct students about how not to waste their theological education.

**Piper then answered four questions — each with several part answers — to help students think about how to glorify God in their thoughts about his truth.**

**1.** The first question was about the definition of affections for the Christian. Piper answered his question, saying by "affections" he did not mean physical, outward reactions, but rather internal,

spiritual and supernatural joy in God, which can sometimes overflow in outward ways. A Christian grows in affection for God, Piper said, through correct thinking about God. So seminary is important, but only as a means to the end of growing in love for God.

**2.** With his second question, Piper asked why the habit of pursuing affection for God is the best way for a student not to waste their theological education. The answer, he

said, is because "enjoying Christ above all things is essential to magnifying Christ above all things." He said when a Christian delights in someone, like a spouse, he or she honors that person.

**3.** Piper's third question was why make joy in God, as in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the ultimate goal of the unspent life rather than faith or obedience. "Because joy in God is the essence of faith and obedience to God," Piper said.

He discussed love of neighbor and how joy intertwines with service.

"Loving your neighbor is the overflow of joy in God that meets the needs of others," he said.

**4.** With his final question, Piper asked if right thinking about God actually produces affection, or if the opposite is true. He answered that right thinking results in proper affection for God and other people.

**In conclusion, he offered five applications and warnings for seminary students.**

**First,** he said the greatest threat to a student's future ministry is the death of enjoying God.

**Second,** future pastors will harm their sheep if they lose their joy in God.

**Third,** Piper said the New Testament says the aim of Christian ministry is to work for truth.

**Fourth,** Piper challenged students not to rest until "the fruit of your mind becomes the flame of your heart" in every class, conversation, book or paper.

**Fifth,** his final point, he said, was for students to pray. He gave an acronym he uses daily in his personal prayer time: IOUs. Each letter represents a prayer from a Psalm:

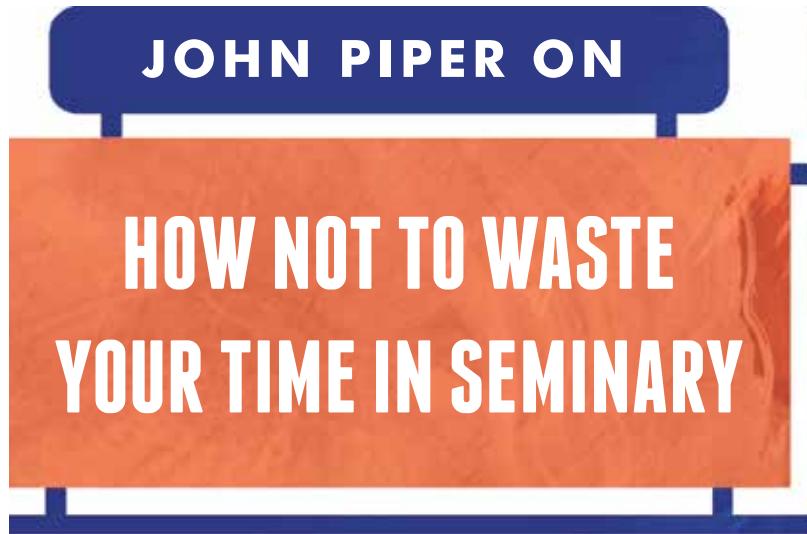
**I:** "Incline my heart to your testimony, O, God," (Psalm 119:36);

**O:** "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things," (Psalm 119: 18);

**U:** "Unite my heart to fear your name," (Psalm 86:11); and

**S:** "Satisfy me in the morning with your steadfast love that I may rejoice and be glad in you," (Psalm 90:14).

*By RuthAnne Irvin. Audio and video from Piper's sermon are available online at [sbtn.edu/resources](http://sbtn.edu/resources).*



# THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

## COLLECTED WISDOM ON MATURING IN SEMINARY

A couple weeks ago, four pastors from the Louisville, Ky., area held a public conversation about seminary students and church membership. Sitting on the panel were Timothy J. Beougher, senior pastor of West Broadway Baptist Church and Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth; Ryan Fullerton, the lead pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church; John Kimbell, pastor of preaching and discipleship at Clifton Baptist Church; and Kevin Smith, teaching pastor at Highview Baptist Church and assistant professor of Christian preaching. Here are some of the take-aways from the panel:

**Seminary students learn a lot of terms and jargon (which is good) but they need to translate that when talking with “ordinary” church members.**

**FULLERTON:** “Someone who is in seminary is not of necessity more mature. But they are almost always proficient in language that involves an expertise around a particular subject. There are extremely mature seminary students, and they are always a blessing to the church because mature Christians are always a blessing. ... What happens is when your level of knowledge begins to mask a level of immaturity, you begin to get a problem.

“Sometimes we’re blessed by a really clear delineation of a particular doctrine. Or would toning that down a bit to establish a good relationship be better at this season? Love and holiness means that there’s sufficient self-awareness that I know how I am affecting people. I am more interested in how I am affecting for good than I am of self-actualizing on my theological knowledge.”

**BEOUGHER:** “I think one of the challenges of being in [the seminary] environment is that we are taught to talk but we are not taught to listen. And we have a lot to share and we want to share it. And so part of that dynamic is learning to ask good questions and then listen, letting people share their pilgrimage, their lives and accepting the fact that they won’t do it with all the precisely correct, theological verbiage.”

**Students can, with good and pure motives, be harmful to local churches.**

**BEOUGHER:** “I’ve seen this a few times where we’ve had a ‘lapperson’ teaching in an environment and maybe did not parse the verb correctly, maybe had a minority interpretation of a passage, and a student just jumped right in and quickly, quickly set the record straight very arrogantly. I’ve had many conversations over the years with students in that environment. If there’s outright heresy, that’s one thing we can discuss. But differences of opinion, different ways of raising things, you need to sit and listen.”

*“One of the primary responsibilities you have from the get-go is to be a good church member.”*  
— John Kimbell

**There are “really effective ways” to jump in and serve a local church.**

**KIMBELL:** “One of the things we stress at Clifton as new students are coming in is to encourage them that one of the primary responsibilities you have from the get-go is to be a good member. Just being a faithful member of this church means being there on Sunday morning, being at our prayer meeting, going to your small group and participating in the ministries that are already there and building up the body. So start there — and don’t jump that step — by demonstrating your faithfulness as a member.

“I think if it starts there, and you’re faithful in that, opportunities just open up if you’re loving the body, if you’re investing, if you’re giving your time. Those opportunities for more teaching or leadership will come organically almost every time if you’re doing that.”

**SMITH:** “If you’re going to be here three to four to five years, I tell students to consider, over that period of time, maybe to be involved in more than one congregation, particularly if your background has been limited to one congregation. If you grew up in a church like Highview with multiple staff and multiple services and multiple campuses, why would you not find it educationally edifying to experience another part of the body and be in another congregation with 150 members who really need a lot of hands-on in trying to bring revitalization to a congregation? So you’re learning something that is other than your background.

**Sometimes, students should get experience preaching during seminary; and sometimes it’s better just to listen.**

**KIMBELL:** “I would say it can depend on the student and what you’re ready to do. And I think there can be a lot of value in sitting under good preaching, seeing good ecclesiology, seeing good pastoral care and experiencing that.”

**FULLERTON:** “There are a ton of country churches, there are a ton of smaller churches, there are a ton of bi-vocational pastors, go and serve. That would be glorious.

“At the same time, I think it’s Ted Tripp who says that the way you teach children to make good decisions isn’t by asking them to make them but by modeling good decisions for them. So it is, I think, being under good shepherding. When I came to Louisville, I wound up at a healthy church, the first really healthy church I think I’d had the privilege of being at, and I would hear guys preaching and I wanted to preach. I had been a preacher before and I really just determined, because I had chosen that church, that I wasn’t going to pursue any opportunities to preach — not because that would be wrong, but because I sensed at that stage that it was pride. I wound up preaching more than anyone else at that church within a year. You can trust the sovereignty of God, if you just put your head down and serve, he can lift you up.

**The opportunities to serve are rarely glamorous, and often, they’re downright difficult.**

**BEOUGHNER:** “Sometimes we are called to serve in tough places. I think a helpful distinction is that there are some places that are toxic places. There are some places that are meat grinders that absolutely chew up pastors and spit them out. That’s one reason you want to do a little bit of homework prior to going to any situation. There are some churches out there that are absolutely toxic, and if that’s the situation then get out.

“Students should take full advantage of the disciple-making avenues of their churches — both individual and corporate.”

**KIMBELL:** “In terms of what you can expect from your pastor, I think that’s going to depend on what situation you’re in. If you’re with a bi-vocational pastor who you have one conversation with and he

says ‘I would love for you to teach a Sunday school; I’ve had a conversation right from the get-go and I’d love to meet with you every week,’ there are situations like that. At Clifton it’s a little different. Probably half of our families are looking for this kind of care and discipleship so we’ve tried to create structures that are helpful for us in that.”

**Discipleship in a local church is both one-on-one and corporate.**

**FULLERTON:** “I think we have done such significant damage to the word ‘discipleship’ by defining discipleship as ‘one-on-one at a coffee shop.’ We have harmed people’s conceptions. So you will literally get people who are like, ‘I’m sitting under exegetical preaching and I go to a great Sunday school, and my small group will get into my life and hold me accountable and minister the gospel to me, but, you know what, I am not being disciplined.’ And I think, ‘Oh, my!’ You are surrounded by an embarrassment of riches, but because you have defined discipleship by one act, that really I’m not sure most of Jesus’ immediate followers almost ever got ... you’re not being disciplined.

“That’s a tragedy and it puts inhumane expectations on pastors who are limited to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, just like you are — and who you don’t want to neglect their families to be with you all the time, too. So I would not deny the immense riches that have come to me from one-on-one meetings. ... Those are sweet. We should pursue that; pray that God would open those up for us in significant portions of our lives. And yet every time you hear a man behind a pulpit open up his heart, and especially the Word of God, you are being disciplined. When godly men place structures in place — those structures didn’t just randomly happen — so that they would be for the edification of the saints. ... I think you can grow a long way through the programs your church lays out and through the ordinary means of grace in the church.”

## *Dan Dumas on* **HAVING A PHILOSOPHY ON MONEY, EVEN WHILE IN SEMINARY**

*THE FOLLOWING IS THE CONCLUSION OF A SERMON DAN DUMAS PREACHED FROM LUKE 16:1-13, where Jesus tells the parable of the shrewd manager. Dumas preached in Southern Seminary's chapel on February 4.*

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**“It’s a pretty simple philosophy: love people and use things. Don’t use people and love things. As soon as that happens, concern, red flags ought to go off in your heart. If God’s your master, then money will be your servant. And that is the proper philosophy of economics for us in gospel labor.**

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**“It’s useless to try and serve God and money, so be generous. I recognize that it’s tough. I recognize that we live in a materialistic age. But we have a unique calling that is upon us. And if we want to teach our people how to handle money, then we’ve got to handle it starting right now, today, while we’re in school — while we’re right here at Southern.**

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**“You see, Jesus is to be Lord over all. That includes our money. So let’s not waste our money. You can’t purchase salvation, you know this. You can’t buy God’s favor, you know this. You can’t buy God’s blessing in your ministry. You’re to give, and you’re to hold loosely the things of this world.**

---

**“I would challenge you to make everlasting friends, to give yourself away, to give away your finances, to sit with your wife at the table tonight and say, ‘Where could we give? Where could we invest? What part of the world, what unreached people group, where could we invest our energy and our mind?’ And let that be the topic not about which ottoman you’re going to buy that matches the furniture. Who cares? Right? It’s all going to burn.**

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**“It is required of a faithful ministers to be shrewd. And you can’t have two masters, so if you’re going to go down this path, it’s an effort in futility. You’re going to get distracted, miserable and have idols of materialism in your life. And that’s just not a part of this calling. We’re in gospel ministry for other people. And that’s what gospel leaders do: they give and give and give and give until it hurts, and they give a little bit more. This is Jesus’ challenge to us.”**

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*Dan Dumas is senior vice president for institutional administration at Southern Seminary.*

“Seminary is so busy,” we’ve all said. Work, family, school, church and everything else presses for our time. As a student, this never feels more true than course work begins to pile up. But as soon as the semester ends the narrative goes, then we’ll get things back in order, then we’ll make up for the neglect we’ve shown our own soul. We may need to sacrifice our spiritual health now, but a favorable time is near.

But, as C.S. Lewis said, a favorable time never comes.

“If we let ourselves, we shall always be waiting for some distraction or other to end before we can really get down to our work. The only people who achieve much are those who want knowledge so badly that they seek it while the conditions are still unfavorable. Favorable conditions never come,” Lewis wrote in his essay, “Learning in War-Time.”

While knowledge is not all we’re after, much of what it means to live the Christian life is to keep our eyes on things above when the things below demand our attention. If anything, when compared with mid-semester work and finals week, the time grows less favorable and the things below — work, school, etc. — clamor for our time even more.

This doesn’t mean Christians shouldn’t work or study as hard as they can, but that they do so unto the Lord and not man. Or, as Lewis said elsewhere, they should keep first things first.

“Put first things first and we get second things thrown in: put second things first and we lose both first and

second things,” he wrote.

If anything, what the pace of seminary offers the seminary student is a barometer of how strong his or her priorities stand against a little pressure. If the only time you read and meditate on Scripture, pray in secret and love your family is when time allows, then there’s a good chance you don’t do those things very often. If seminary is enough to unsettle your priorities, you need to address the problem before the rest of your life happens. Finals week is not a favorable time. Life isn’t a very favorable time, either.

So work hard. Study hard. Pursue excellence in your studies and don’t waste this opportunity. But prioritize the health of your soul now. What will it profit you if you gain straight A’s and lose your soul? Walk in integrity now. Spend time reading Scripture, praying and worshiping now. Spend time with your family now.

For the sake of consistency, I’ll let C.S. Lewis say it better: “Never, in peace or war, commit your virtue or your happiness to the future.”

Work unto the Lord, not man, and make the best use of your time. Go through your semester the way you should go through all the unfavorable times in your life, and that’s by keeping first things first.

*Matt Damico is a staff writer for Southern Seminary. He graduated from Southern in 2012 with a master of divinity in Christian ministry and serves as associate pastor of worship at Kenwood Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.*



# FINISHING STRONG

## PERSEVERING THROUGH YOUR 'MID-DEGREE CRISIS'

Higher-ed institutions across the country are filled with exhausted, irritable and weary students searching for light at the end of the academic tunnel.

### The crisis

Southern's master of divinity degree is a behemoth 88-credit hour program, no small feat for anyone. Academic exhaustion and burnt-out enthusiasm aren't reflective of a lazy spirit, but if not properly corrected those feelings evolve to affect you, the student, as well as your family and future ministry.

"At some point in your seminary career you will question not only the worthiness of your education, but even its morality," said Hershael York, Victor and Louise Lester Professor of Christian Preaching and associate dean of ministry and proclamation. "After all, you don't need a diploma hanging on your wall in order to serve Jesus. You'll further adorn your excuses with a pious veneer, lamenting the lostness of the world and the urgency of the front lines of spiritual battle, or the inherent unfairness of asking others to sacrifice for you to boast the appendage of a few letters after your name.

"When that moment comes, don't be fooled into forgetting why you came to seminary in the first place. God brought you here, calling you not only to minister, but also to prepare. The battles that lie ahead

will find you better equipped for victory because of the struggles of seminary you face today. Discovering God's faithfulness in defeating the lion and the bear will one day give you confidence as you face Goliath," said York.

### Perseverance

The disciplines of prayer, faith and perseverance are the solutions to struggle, despair and fear.

"If Jesus called you to take up a cross and follow him, don't be shocked that it involves pain," said York.

### Crisis management

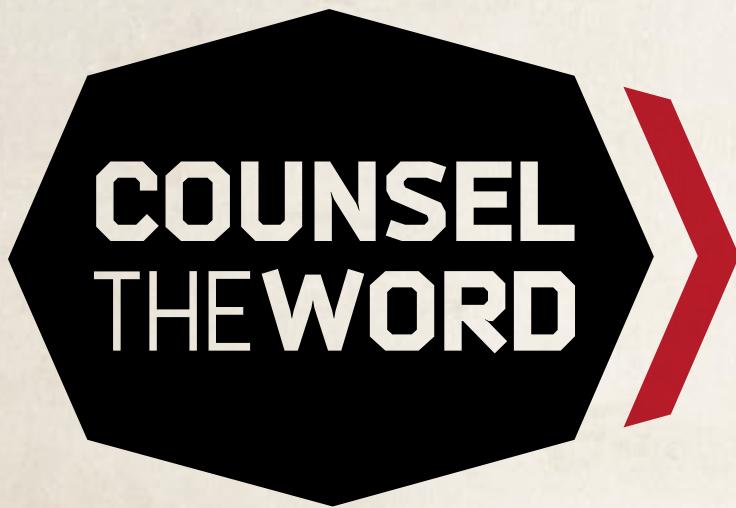
The road to graduation is not always smooth for seminarians. Realizing this, Southern Seminary created the Center for Student Success to help students as they progress toward graduation. The center, housed in Norton 154, provides services for academic advising, academic achievement and support for international students and students with disabilities.

"Academic success is relative to each student – but graduation is every student's goal," said Matt Minier, director of Student Success.

"As a student, if you have questions and don't know where to go, we want to be your first stop," Minier said. "We are here to be fully responsive to students' needs."

*The above came from a 2011 essay by Emily Griffin.*





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# ‘O God, help me keep this promise’

## THE DAILY LIFE OF SEMINARIAN J.R. BAER

By Trey Moss

The seminary Archives and Special Collection office recently received several student notebooks from the early years of Southern Seminary. Jerome R. Baer, a student who owned one of the journals, recorded his daily activities in Louisville, Ky., for the 1880-1881 year. These pages contain an example of the ebb and flow of seminary life from the perspective of the late 19th century. The events recorded lack the modern conveniences to which we’re accustomed. Here, no record of emails, online quizzes, iPads or automobiles exist. However, Baer’s devotion and character, albeit not perfect, provide for us an example to follow.

Here are five ways J.R. Baer chose not to waste a year of his theological education:

### 1. Baer started a regular study regimen and stuck to it. There are regular entries within Baer’s journal concerning his study habits:

**Monday, Sept. 6,** “Studied Homiletics and Polemics until noon. Handed an essay to Dr. Broadus on, ‘How I spent the Summer,’ recited in Homiletics — took a lecture in Church Government.”

**Monday, Oct. 11,** “Finished writing my sermon, attended Homiletics and Church Government recitation, studied Polemics and Church government at night.”  
Dec. 13, “Studied and recited as usual.”

### 2. Baer, following a missed opportunity, vowed to never give up an opportunity to preach again. He wrote often about the sermons he was preparing if the opportunity to preach presented itself:

**Nov. 28,** “Visited Bro. J.W. Hopkins who is sick, and



J.R.’s journal

told him in the presence of Bro. English, that I would never refuse to preach again (as he invited me to preach to-night) if providence hindered not hereafter. O God, help me to keep this promise for Christ’s sake.”

### 3. He sacrificed for those closest to him. Baer recorded the events surrounding the death of his friend, Bro. Rupert:

**Thursday, Sept. 23,** “Had a restless night on account of Bro. Rupert’s sickness. Helped to remove him to St. Joseph’s infirmary after the Dr. (Holland) pronounced his case, typhoid fever. ... took some clothes to Bro. Rupert at night.”

**Tuesday, Sept. 28,** “Took Bro. Rupert some clothes, told Mrs. Moonie to go see him.”

**Friday, Oct. 8,** “Heard of Bro. Rupert’s death, who died about 11 o’clock last night — went to Dr. Holland’s also to Dr. Boyce’s to see about the funeral service — told Mr. Hoagland of the sad news who was to let Bro. Hopkins know of it — helped dress the corpse — we all marched to the St. Joseph’s infirmary thence to Broadway Baptist Church with corpse — exercises at the church conducted by Drs. Manly and Broadus and Burrows.”

**Saturday, Oct. 9,** “Went to see Drs. Boyce and Holland about Bro. R’s trunk and the \$14.75 left in my care — locked the trunk, gave the money to Dr. Holland. ... wrote a letter to Dr. C.A. Rupert and wife.”

### 4. Baer took walks and found leisure time among his studies. He recorded his repose as diligently as his academic and ministry endeavors:

**Wednesday, Sept. 8,** “Took a walk before breakfast, felt much refreshed by it.”

**Tuesday, Jan. 4,** “Studied nearly all day on Polemics review — in the evening went down to the Ohio and walked nearly half way across it on the ice.”

### 5. He took part in local ministry within his community. He did so by finding a need and giving himself to it. And the Lord blessed it:

**Sunday, Feb. 20,** “Went to Hope as usual, stayed for preaching — went to Watkins Hall, 17th and Main, to our Sunday School — 203 present.”

**Sunday, Feb. 27,** “Went to Hope Baptist Church as usual, Sunday School and preaching — went to Watkins Hall Sunday School in the evening — 251 present.”

Wavery Hotel where Baer lived while at seminary



**Sunday, March 6,** “Went to Hope as usual, stayed for preaching — went to the mission in the evening, 290 present.”

**Sunday, March 13,** “Went to Hope as usual, to the mission in the evening (303 present), went to Chestnut Street Baptist Church at night. After the mission Sunday school visited 4 of my Sunday school scholars made arrangement to meet at the Mrs. Rock’s, Saturday at 3 o’clock to study the Sunday school lesson.”

The diligence and devotion applied by Baer during his time in seminary mattered afterward.

After his journal ends, Baer made his way back to his home state of Virginia. There, he received a license to preach in 1881.<sup>1</sup> And after six years of serving at a country church, Singer’s Glen Baptist Church, he became the pastor of that small, 30-person congregation in 1887. In his six years as the pastor of that congregation, baptisms and attendance increased along with giving to the association. By 1892, the church grew to 90 members, a growth of 200 percent within five years.<sup>2</sup> But then in 1893, for reasons unstated, Singer’s Glen called a different pastor. Still, Baer continued as a member of that congregation and was involved in associational activities for the next 50 years until his death in 1940.

*The student journals and Baptist minutes mentioned in this article are available for reading and research at the James P. Boyce Centennial Library Archives and Special Collections.*

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Augusta [Va.] Baptist Association Minutes 1881, the Southern Baptist Seminary Archives, pg. 3

<sup>2</sup>Augusta [Va.] Baptist Association Minutes 1892, the Southern Baptist Seminary Archives, pg. 22

# Corollary between the mind and mouth

SOUTHERN STORY: ROB PLUMMER

By Aaron Cline Hanbury

“I guess it came together for me after my junior year,” said Rob Plummer, who in 1993 planned to be in the United States diplomatic corps. “I had a dream internship in Washington, D.C., where I was working in the State Department.”

It was the kind of internship where he wasn’t just making photocopies and running errands for higher ups. As a public policy student at Duke University, he knew some things about D.C. work — and still he was doing “everything an intern would want to do.”

But he didn’t like it.

“I was just sort of disillusioned with it,” he said. “This was not ultimately what ignites my passion.

“I could do this,” he said. “I’ve experienced the best case scenario of doing this, and I’m left wanting to do other things. I’m left wanting to be in the Scriptures and wanting to be sharing the gospel with people.”

Plummer, who is now professor of New Testament interpretation at Southern Seminary, grew up in Brentwood, Tenn., near the state capital, Nashville. There on his family’s 15-acre hobby farm, where they kept milk goats and chickens and grew vegetables, he learned the value of hard work, a trait he would carry through the years after farm life.

His family attended Brentwood Baptist Church, where Plummer was a Royal Ambassador (the Southern Baptist kind of Boy Scouts). At an RA camp, when he was 13 years old, Plummer came to faith in Jesus Christ — he said he “really understood that his sins are what put Jesus on the cross” — after which he was baptized at his home church. After he became a Christian, his mother taught him to read through the Bible in a year (by reading three chapters a day). So, by time he entered Duke University as a freshman, he had read through the Bible multiple times. Because of his mother’s instruction and encouragement in reading the Scriptures, Plummer claims that she is one of the two most “important theological influences” on his life.

“I still rely upon that foundation of reading through the Bible as a teenager,” he said.

The other “important theological influence” on his life was the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Duke. The group offered him an intellectually vibrant community and zeal for sharing the good news that showed him the corollary between the mind and mouth of the Christian faith.

And as his interests grew, he took more and more courses in religious studies and the Greek language — which he studied with influential New Testament scholar E.P. Sanders. He also took a course — Perspectives on the World Christian

Movement — at a local church near the university.

He said that mission course “resonated with everything else” he was learning and feeling at the time. And his internship in Washington confirmed for him that his heart was in the ministry.

“When I came out of Duke, I thought I either wanted to be a religion professor or I wanted to be a missionary,” he said.

After college, Plummer taught English in China, and loved it. “It was great,” he said. And, when he returned, seminary was his next step. Everyone he knew went to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary or Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. After talking with the pastor of his home church, Plummer decided to visit Southern Seminary.

During Plummer’s visit, a student from the seminary saw him wandering around the first floor of the student center and stopped to share the gospel with him.

“He thought I was someone from the community who wandered in and he shared the gospel with me,” said Plummer. “And that really made a big impression on me.”

Attending a seminary with an evangelistic student body attracted Plummer. And even though he didn’t visit until July, he was able to begin taking classes a few weeks later in August of 1994.

The mid-1990s were a tumultuous time at Southern Seminary, as the school moved away from a theologically moderate community to a conservative evangelical one.

“To be honest, it was not really a great time to be a student here,” he said. “But there were also many good things here.”

One of those good things was Plummer’s mentor, Mark Seifrid. Once Plummer recognized in Seifrid an evangelical view of the Scriptures and a love for mission, he asked to work for him. Seifrid accepted, and Plummer ended up grading for him. During the following years, he and his mentor developed a close relationship.

After Plummer graduated with his master of divinity degree in 1997, he planned to pursue a doctoral degree at a different seminary or university. When several options fell through, he ended up staying at Southern Seminary and studying under Seifrid. But still, “it was basically like going to two different schools,” he said, “because the faculty had turned over so much.”

At the beginning of his doctoral studies in 1997, Plummer’s friend, Jenny James, told him, “I just met the love of your life.” He said he’d like to meet her. But when Plummer did meet his future wife, Chandi, she didn’t pay him much attention. He did find out, though, that she speaks French. And so does he.



“I started a French club for people who liked to speak French — not with completely pure motives, I’ll grant,” he said.

So they became acquainted speaking French with each other. Eventually, they began dating. And then served together in a Chinese church teaching in its (English speaking) youth ministry.

When the time arrived for Plummer to propose, he did so in the “valley of decision” (the “valley” between Carver and Norton halls on the seminary’s campus). They married June 5 of 1999. Now, almost 15 years later, the Plummers have three daughters: Sarah Beth (11), Chloe (8) and Anabell (“Bella,” 6).

Upon Plummer’s finishing his doctor of philosophy degree, Daniel L. Akin, the then-vice president for academic administration and dean of the School of Theology, recognized in Plummer a combination of academic ability and missions-mindedness that he determined made him an ideal fit for the seminary. He offered Plummer a job that same year. After considering other options, Plummer accepted Akin’s offer and joined Southern Seminary in January 2002.

In the time since, Plummer has been able to pursue both missions and scholarship, just as Akin encouraged him: he regularly leads missions efforts around the world and is author of several books, including his widely acclaimed (and translated) *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*.

So, from sharing the gospel and missions to the academic work of interpreting the Bible, Plummer is very much the man whose mother taught him to read the Bible, and who learned in college the corollary between the mind and mouth of the Christian faith.

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## Seen at Southern

The 2014 Great Commission Week include Aaron Harvie preaching the first chapel message of the week (below); seminary faculty and several guests on a panel discussion (bottom left); the plane from *The End of the Spear*, a film about martyred missionaries in Ecuador (top right); and the dedication of the new Jenkins Center (bottom right).





## In new center dedication, Mohler describes urgency for a Christian understanding of Islam

By Aaron Cline Hanbury

Islam is the “great rival system of belief” to Christianity, according to R. Albert Mohler Jr. And with 1.6 billion adherents, Muslims make up nearly a quarter of the world’s population. In response, the leadership of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary opened and dedicated a new academic center for the study of Islam, Feb. 13.

“I am very, very excited about the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam,” said Mohler, president of Southern Seminary, during a chapel service immediately preceding the dedication. He said that faithfulness to the Great Commission requires ministers to study this rival religion, and “not merely to understand Islam

as others might seek to understand it, but to achieve a Christian understanding of Islam.”

The dedication of the new center coincided with the seminary’s annual Great Commission Week. The four-day event included panel discussions with veteran missionaries and church planters, outreach “excursions” in the Louisville, Ky., community and evangelistic training sessions.

According to Mohler, the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam, named for donors Connie and Bill Jenkins, will lead Southern Seminary — and the broader evangelical academy — in studying and engaging Islam through the lens of the Christian gospel. And while

he affirmed the value and even necessity of studying Islam through secular and Islamic scholarship, the primary concern of the center is engagement, including evangelism and apologetics.

Randy Stinson, senior vice president for academic administration and provost, explained that a group of fellows who are “experts in the area of Islam” will lead the Jenkins Center through research, seminars and writing.

“Not only will they be able to help believers understand various global events from a Christian perspective, they will be producing articles, books and other resources for the church,” Stinson said. “They will also host confer-

ences, roundtable discussions and summits with Islamic scholars from around the world.

“I am personally grateful for the generosity of the Jenkins family and believe that this center will be significantly instrumental in the effective training of future generations of gospel ministers,” he said.

The center opens with four fellows, two of whom cannot be announced for security reasons related to their work. The other two, J.D. Greear and Michael Youssef, are scholars who live and minister in the United States.

Greear, who is lead pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, N.C., studied Islamic theology during his doctoral work at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and served as a missionary among Muslims prior to pastoring in the United States. In anticipation of the center’s launch, he expressed the urgency of the center’s mission and his excitement about helping lead in the effort.

“In many ways, Islam represents the ‘great frontier’ for the Christian church,” he said. “How exciting to see God bringing together such a high caliber team of gospel-saturated, faith-filled believers at Southern Seminary to believe God together for the salvation of Muslims. I am excited about the discussions and the future together. Might our generation be the one that sees this vast network of unreached peoples turned for the gospel?”

The Egyptian-born Youssef is an author, founding rector of the Church of the Apostles in Atlanta, Ga., and founder and president of Leading The Way, a worldwide media ministry. Originally, the seminary planned for Youssef to present the inaugural Jenkins Center lecture in conjunction with the center’s launch. However, inclement weather prohibited his traveling to Louisville. Youssef will give the inaugural lecture at a later date.

In place of Youssef, Mohler gave an address during chapel, “Monotheism Is Not Enough.” Speaking from James 2:19, he pushed back against the idea of three “Abrahamic religions” — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — arguing that authentic Abrahamic faith leads to Jesus Christ.

“We often hear ... the idea that there are three Abrahamic faiths. I can only imagine what Abraham would say to that,” Mohler said, referencing an exchange in John 8:58, where those who claim to be the sons of Abraham fail to believe in Jesus. In response, Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I am.”

Mohler explained that while Abraham was certainly a monotheist, he “learned to look forward and trust God for his unilateral provision for salvation,” he said. “Monotheism is not enough.”

Mohler described “two great rival systems of belief,” arguing that Islam represents the “main rival” to Christianity around the world.

“In the west, that main system of belief is modern secularism — which is a complete worldview system. But almost everywhere else in the world, Islam is the main rival in terms

of the belief systems that take a hold of humanity,” he said.

Mohler outlined challenges Islam presents the church, starting with demographics. He pointed out that the vast majority of unreached people live in Islamic nations or in regions where Muslims are the majority, explaining that increasingly the task of Christian missions requires engaging Islam.

Islam also presents challenges related to theology and apologetics, according to Mohler. He stressed again that Christian discussions of Muslim theology must seek to understand Islam in light of the gospel.

Finally, Mohler said that Christians face a challenge of love regarding Islam. Loving Muslims, he said, means understanding and engaging Muslims in both “honest and accurate” and “loving and respectful” ways.

“Jesus ordered us to go into all the world and to find all the world as our neighbor — a neighbor we are to love,” he said. “And if we do love, we will seek to understand what

they believe and we seek to confront them with the gospel.”

Closing, Mohler emphasized the importance of Southern Seminary’s new initiatives in developing this Christian understanding of Islam, calling it a “non-negotiable” for future ministers.

The Jenkins family attended the Jenkins Center dedication chapel service and the ribbon-cutting ceremony. During a reception immediately following, members of the seminary community expressed thanks to the family. The Jenkins are members of Paoli Christian Church in Paoli, Ind., where Bill Jenkins, co-founder and manager of Mainstream Investments and Advisors in New Albany, Ind., is an elder and Connie Jenkins, a graduate of the Women’s Ministry Institute at Southern Seminary, is involved in the women’s ministry. They have four grown sons: Aaron, Stephen, Chad and Neil.

The Jenkins Center website — [jenkins.sbts.edu](http://jenkins.sbts.edu) — provides information about and resources for the engagement of Islam.



Benefactors Bill (left) and Connie (right) Jenkins at the official opening of the Jenkins Center

# Announcements

## Seminary Wives Institute

Seminary Wives Institute classes began January 23. The last term of the semester starts March 6. Students take one class per six week term for \$10. Some classes are filling up, so those interested should not delay in registering. Seminar Saturday is March 8. Course descriptions and childcare applications are also on the webpage: [sbts.edu/women/seminary-wives-institute](http://sbts.edu/women/seminary-wives-institute). Email SWI at [swi@sbts.edu](mailto:swi@sbts.edu).

## Food collection for The Attic

The Attic now accepts food items between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Donors should bring the items during these hours so that a volunteer may store them to keep for seminary families in need. Imperishable food is accepted and may be left in the donation bins. Families in need who would benefit from these donations must contact The Attic at [theattic@sbts.edu](mailto:theattic@sbts.edu) and arrange an appointment for picking up food items.

## Health and Rec

More information on hours and fitness classes are available at [sbts.edu/hrc](http://sbts.edu/hrc), the front desk or call 897-4720.

## Seminary Clinic hours

Staff, students and their immediate family members are provided a health maintenance program through the clinic, located on the second floor of the campus center, Honeycutt 213.

*Monday-Friday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.*

More information and price listings are found on the clinic website, [sbts.edu/clinic](http://sbts.edu/clinic).

## Free sewing class

The free sewing class led by Mrs. Barbara Gentry meets from 6 - 7:30 p.m., Mondays in Fuller Room 34. Sewing machines are provided at no cost. No experience is required, but women with experience may also participate. Knitting and crocheting lessons will also be offered. Mrs. Gentry leads the class assisted by Mrs. Donna Chancellor. For more information, call Mrs. Gentry locally at 423-8255.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
2	3  <b>Body Blitz; Zumba; Mommy and Me; The Core Foundry (co-ed); Total Toning; Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</b>	4  <b>Chapel</b> 10 a.m.   Alumni Chapel Vance Pitman  <b>Fast Feat; The Core Foundry (men only); HIIT; Boot Camp; Total Toning; Aqua Alive; Core Essentials; Zumba; Adult Ballet</b> Childcare 9 a.m. - noon; 3 - 6 p.m.
9	10  <b>Body Blitz; Zumba; Mommy and Me; The Core Foundry (co-ed); Total Toning; Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</b>	11  <b>Chapel</b> 10 a.m.   Alumni Chapel Paul Chitwood  <b>Fast Feat; The Core Foundry (men only); HIIT; Boot Camp; Total Toning; Aqua Alive; Core Essentials; Zumba; Adult Ballet</b> Childcare 9 a.m. - noon; 3 - 6 p.m.
16	17  <b>Body Blitz; Zumba; Mommy and Me; The Core Foundry (co-ed); Total Toning; Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</b>	18  <b>Chapel</b> 10 a.m.   Alumni Chapel Dan DeWitt  <b>Fast Feat; The Core Foundry (men only); HIIT; Boot Camp; Total Toning; Aqua Alive; Core Essentials; Zumba; Adult Ballet</b> Childcare 9 a.m. - noon; 3 - 6 p.m.
23 / 30	24 / 31  <b>Body Blitz; Zumba; Mommy and Me; The Core Foundry (co-ed); Total Toning; Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</b>	25  <b>Chapel</b> 10 a.m.   Alumni Chapel OS Hawkins  <b>Fast Feat; The Core Foundry (men only); HIIT; Boot Camp; Total Toning; Aqua Alive; Core Essentials; Zumba; Adult Ballet</b> Childcare 9 a.m. - noon; 3 - 6 p.m.

## MARCH 2014

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		<p>9Marks Conference</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Body Blitz; Mommy and Me; Zumba; The Core Foundry (Co-ed) Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Chapel 10 a.m.   Alumni Chapel Owen Strachan</p> <p>Seminary Wives Institute 7 p.m.</p> <p>Fast Feat; HIIT; Boot Camp; Total Toning; Aqua Alive; Core Essentials; Zumba; Adult Ballet Childcare 9 a.m. - noon; 3 - 6 p.m.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Boyce Friday Night Fires</p> <p>The Core Foundry (men only); Body Blitz; Zumba Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</p>	<p>8</p> <p>To Love the Sojourner International Outreach</p> <p>Seminar Saturday 9 a.m. - 3:10 p.m.</p> <p>Parents Night Out 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.</p>
<p>12</p> <p>Body Blitz; Mommy and Me; Zumba; The Core Foundry (co-ed) Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Chapel 10 a.m.   Alumni Chapel Daniel Montgomery</p> <p>Seminary Wives Institute 7 p.m.</p> <p>Fast Feat; HIIT; Boot Camp; Total Toning; Aqua Alive; Core Essentials; Zumba; Adult Ballet Childcare 9 a.m. - noon; 3 - 6 p.m.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Renown Conference</p> <p>The Core Foundry (men only); Body Blitz; Zumba Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Flag Football 2 p.m.</p>
<p>19</p> <p>Body Blitz; Mommy and Me; Zumba; The Core Foundry (co-ed) Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Chapel 10 a.m.   Alumni Chapel David Platt</p> <p>Seminary Wives Institute 7 p.m.</p> <p>Fast Feat; HIIT; Boot Camp; Total Toning; Aqua Alive; Core Essentials; Zumba; Adult Ballet Childcare 9 a.m. - noon; 3 - 6 p.m.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>SBTS Preview Day</p> <p>Family camping trip</p> <p>The Core Foundry (men only); Body Blitz; Zumba Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Bouncy house day 9 a.m. - noon</p> <p>Flag football 2 p.m.</p> <p>Boyce men's softball tournament</p>
<p>26</p> <p>Body Blitz; Mommy and Me; Zumba; The Core Foundry (co-ed) Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Chapel 10 a.m.   Alumni Chapel Clint Pressley</p> <p>Seminary Wives Institute 7 p.m.</p> <p>Fast Feat; HIIT; Boot Camp; Total Toning; Aqua Alive; Core Essentials; Zumba; Adult Ballet Childcare 9 a.m. - noon; 3 - 6 p.m.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Parents Night Out 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.</p> <p>The Core Foundry (men only); Body Blitz; Zumba Childcare 9 a.m. - noon</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Flag football 2 p.m.</p>

# Towers

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
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## 3

### Questions

WITH

#### Nancy Pearcey

Editor-at-large of The Pearcey Report, scholar in residence and professor at Houston Baptist University, where she is also director of the Francis Schaeffer Center for Worldview and Culture and a fellow at the Discovery Institute



## —1—

### How should Christians prioritize personal holiness in their engagement of the art and entertainment of an unbelieving culture?

Christians often think we can avoid being “conformed to the world” (Rom 12:2) by avoiding worldly ideas. But as G. K. Chesterton said, ideas are more dangerous to the person who has not studied them. He has no mental filter, so a new idea will “fly to his head like wine to the head of a teetotaler.” And where do most people pick up those intoxicating ideas? From books, music, movies, advertising. That’s why Christians must learn how to “read” worldviews when they come to us not in words, where they’re easier to recognize, but in image, plot and characterization.

## —2—

### Is there such a thing as unredeemable art and entertainment?

Certainly: pornography. Anything intended to destroy human dignity and devalue human life. The reason to learn about American culture is to address Americans in ways they can understand. What would you think of a missionary in a Muslim country who refused to learn about Muslim culture? He would not be very effective in communicating the gospel. To train as a missionary, however, you should expose yourself to the best books, the best music, the best movies. The classics are where a culture’s serious ideas are given expression.

## —3—

### What does your ideal Saturday morning look like?

I like to make Saturday a time to refuel. I listen to classical music and read the classic novels that have shaped the Western mind. I read books on apologetics and worldview to learn to “translate” timeless biblical truth into contemporary language — to anticipate people’s questions and rehearse how to answer them. By immersing myself in the arts and ideas, I want to help Christians learn how the arts can be a powerful means of communicating biblical truth.