

Subject: Reflection

Reflecting over the past eight weeks of ABC, I have realized that this journey was not just about fulfilling an academic requirement. It was a profound experience of personal and spiritual growth, learning to think critically, write faithfully, research diligently, and live intentionally as a student and servant of Christ. What I initially thought would be a course on writing research papers in the Turabian style turned out to be a holistic approach to educating towards ministry, unified between academic excellence, spiritual formation, and personal development.

Conceptual Learning

One of the initial central notions I started to understand is the priority of academic research and worship. This was something new to me. Before this course, I tended to consider activities such as prayer, reading the Bible, and worshiping spiritually, whereas reading, writing, and researching were academic. By the end of our discussions and readings, I started to understand that well-researched work is an exercise in stewardship- it is learning to employ the mind he has given me to discover the truth and serve others.

Learning Turabian style as a proper tool was a struggle and a success. Initially, the very specifics of working with formatting footnotes, bibliography, and headings were exhausting. However, as the weeks proceeded, I discovered that paying attention to details was a component of respecting my readers and integrity in research. It is not only about not plagiarizing but also giving credit where credit is due, to be modest in that I am building on the studies of others who have had their way before me.

Critical thinking is another thing that the course has taught me in the context of theological education. From my discussion of the Individual-in-Community, I was questioned in

my beliefs about how my faith is informed not only through my relationship with God, but also through the community of believers around me¹. This reminded me that research and writing are not done in a vacuum—they are dialogues with the broader body of Christ. Reading the work of scholars, I am hearing the voices of the Church over time; when I write my own work, I am adding my humble voice to the dialogue.

One more central conceptual lesson we learned was through our discussion of embodied vs. digital spiritual growth. Until taking this course, my vision of online ministry was that of an alternative option in case of the impossibility of in-person meetings. However, in reading and subsequent discussion, I realized each mode's strengths and weaknesses. Embodied spiritual growth refers to spiritual development's traditional, physical aspects, such as attending church services. In contrast, digital spiritual growth involves online platforms and resources for spiritual learning and community building.

Personal Learning

As an individual, I learned that I can accomplish more than I could imagine through disciplined study. The amount of reading and writing was overwhelming at the beginning of the course. However, by dividing much larger tasks into smaller steps and allowing myself to allot specific time intervals to study, I discovered that I, too, could maintain the pace and even the process, and I truly enjoyed it. This has made me bold enough that I will be able to cope with the requirements of graduate-level theological studies. I also learned that I am inclined to procrastinate by not writing until I feel fully prepared.

As a student, I was made to understand the notions of actively discussing. Previously, I could have composed my obligatory posts quickly and forgotten about them. However, this

¹ John D. Barry and Lazarus Wentz, eds., [*Diccionario Bíblico Lexham*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

course taught me the importance of engaging in meaningful discussions, actively participating in forum posts, and responding thoughtfully to my peers' contributions. This enhanced my learning and fostered a sense of community and collaboration within the course. As a student and a Christian, I understood that this course was not just about acquiring information for ministry, but about personal transformation. In every paper, I was eager to apply what I had learned to my spiritual journey. For instance, I became more purposeful in engaging with my daily practices, seeing them as acts of worship. This transformation was particularly evident in my ecological spiritual formation, where I became more mindful of my consumption and appreciative of the nature around me.

Learnings About Me

Perhaps one of the lessons I learned about myself is that I perform extremely well when I can relate academic work to the reality of a ministry setting. For example, during practice of the research methods, I discovered that I was seeking sources that would assist me in answering real questions people pose at my Church. This made the assignments seem task-oriented and useful instantly.

I am detail-oriented and big-picture, but not simultaneously. Lastly, I learnt that I have to create time to invite God into my studies. When I prayed before doing research or writing, I was able to work and write more focused without feeling anxious and had a greater desire to work out. This made me remember that theological studies are equally a discipline of the spirit rather than one of the minds.

Application to Life and Ministry

The skills I learn in this course will influence my ministry for many years to come. First, research knowledge will enable me to write scripturally sound sermons and teachings². I understand how to locate and assess academic materials that can enlighten me on the Scripture and enable me to answer disturbing questions.

Second, my writing skills will enable me to be more articulate when I undertake ministry. Whether it is a devotional to my congregation, training materials for volunteers, or thoughtful posts on social media, the ideas of clarity, coherence, and reasoned sourcing will be relevant. Third, theological understandings of our discussions will directly affect my service. Learning about small groups and personal discipleship as significant community aspects will motivate me to always focus on them.

Future perceptions

In the future, I would like to continue developing the habits I adopted due to this course. I intend to have a research notebook to record my ideas, sources, and ways ideas could be used in a ministry context as I read. I also need to train writing regularly, both when I have tasks and when I don't, to make communication one of the advantages. I will also be involved in embodied and digital ministry, but with an understanding of the capabilities and constraints. I, too, would like to find a way to explore creative care in the discipleship of my church-maybe some form of church clean-up day, sermons in Church on how to steward creation using the Bible, or outdoor prayer services.

Final Reflection

Having thought about it, this course has changed how I perceive learning and ministry. I walked in thinking I would be equipped with technical skills; I walked out with a renewed vision

² Keith Brooks, [*Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the New Testament*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 1–3

of blending scholarship, discipleship, and personal development. I have learned that research is a stewardship, writing is a ministry instrument, and preparation is not all about producing assignments but about fixing my soul.

In my memo to myself, I say, "Separate not learning and loving God." Be humble in pursuing research, fluent and gracious in writing, and diligent and prayerful in preparing for ministry. Just thinking that you want to pass a course is not the objective; the objective is that you are molded into a servant of the word who will be able to handle the word of truth.

Bibliography

John D. Barry and Lazarus Wentz, eds., [*Diccionario Biblico Lexham*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

Keith Brooks, [*Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the New Testament*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 1–3.