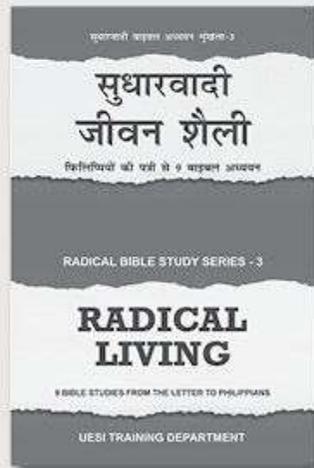
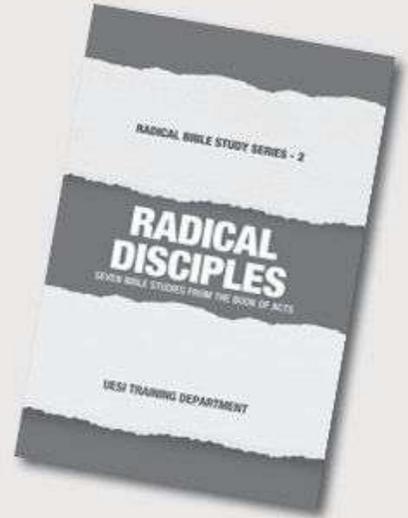
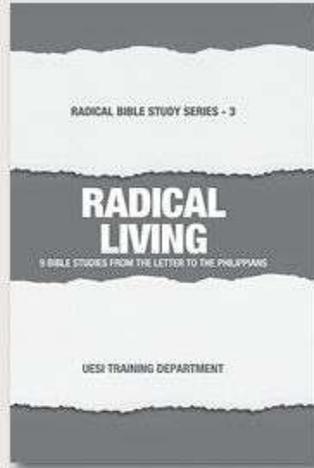
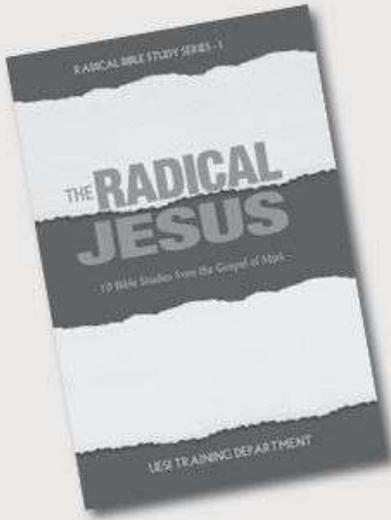


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Can Faith and Academics Blend?

Often there is a tendency to treat Academics and Faith as separate entities and compartmentalize it as secular and sacred. Integration of both becomes a challenge. To integrate is to combine two or more things to make something more effective.

God created the entire universe as a whole and everything is under His dominion. God is Omniscient, full of wisdom and nothing is beyond his reach. Every discipline, be it Science, Arts, Philosophy, Sociology etc. are held together to sustain the God-created universe. Nothing can be segregated. Our field of study should reveal the very nature of God, human and the very purpose of the created order. It should make a student curious to search for truth, reason, and morality and help their overall development.

The integration of faith and academics advances critical analysis of academic content through the lens of a biblical worldview. If the faith can provoke students to bring a counterculture to the existing false theories in academia, it will be a great contribution. The knowledge of the fact that God is the author of all wisdom, and He enlightens us in the field of study gives meaning, purpose, quality of learning and develops a right attitude towards the subjects. Our understanding of faith is deepened as we apply the insights of the disciplines to God's word and world. Students who connect can better contribute to the needs of the society and get into higher levels of influence.

Robert Andrews Millikan, winner of the Nobel Prize for physics in 1923 wrote: "...the scientific and the religious sides of life often come into contact and mutually support each other. Science without religion obviously may become a curse, rather than a blessing to mankind...on the other hand, history has shown that religion without science breeds dogmatism, bigotry, and persecution".

I invite you to explore more as you read thought-provoking and eye-opening articles by the experienced writers inspiring us to be more proactive in relating faith and academics to the present context.

As a student I heard that Campus Link should be placed in the college libraries so that students and faculty will have access to enhance their thinking beyond academics.

I thank God for my predecessor, Bro. Athma Soruban for discharging his role as the Honorary editor for the last six years and passing on the baton to me.



Jessy Jacob,
Hon. Editor in charge



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faith, works and academics



“For we are His workmanship(Poima) created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Ergos), which God prepared in advance or us to do” Ephesians 2:10

A world of three gaps?

Let us begin with a question. Are Faith, Work and Academics pulling apart in our times?

The industry (work world) blames that the academia (student-faculty world) is not equipped enough to deal with the challenges or generate any break through fresh knowledge. On the other hand, the academia blames that the industry does not accept their new ideas and research, brushing it off as ‘bookish and unrealistic’. At the crux of this gap, both students and the work world, are unable to accept each other.

As I write this, travelling through Central India, I see parched farm lands, less yielding agri efforts and news of farmer suicides (Reports inform over 3600 farmer suicides in the last accounted year- yes, it was over 10 suicides per day in these areas).

I wonder why!

Aren't we the generation that boast of achievements in industry, academia and theology with the maximum number of PhDs in any field?

Where are the gaps?

Industry (work world) can't take academia to solve this? Can't the faith inspire industry / academia to receive breakthrough- reconciliations?

Lead

Similarly, there is a visible widening gap in the faith-work realm. Work produced by faith in God, in His plan against what is currently happening in the world in various segments. Add to that, the other gap; Faith-Academics gap, where there is a dearth of research that can bring solution to the pain points in the society seeking God's wisdom that can be applied to that situation.

Can FAITH fuel our WORK (industry)?
Can ACADEMICS show forth newer dimensions of each field with FAITH, in a pursuit of what God wants these to be?

WORK- Is it Secular? Or a Holy ordination from God?

The Bible says that 'WORK' is a Holy ordination from God. It is unfortunately misunderstood by many, as a "secular" part of our lives.

WORK- *Mel-aw-kah*

The word 'WORK' appears first in the Scripture in Genesis 2:1. The Hebrew

word, *Mel-aw-kah*, was used here as an expression of God's own activity, as the creator. And the same word – *Mel-aw-kah* is used for the work humankind and means "to do".

This Hebrew Word is a noun and appears 168 times in the Old Testament

Some of the notable verses that uses *Mel-aw-kah*;

- ✓ Joseph @ Work- Genesis: 39: 11
- ✓ Exodus 20:9- Six days shall thou labour and work
- ✓ Bezalel @ Work: Exodus 31: 2-3
- ✓ Nehemiah @ Work: Neh 2:16, 4:11,15,16,19,21, 5:16, 6:3
- ✓ Daniel @ Work: Daniel 8: 27

From its active usages, it is about WORK as an expression of creativity and energy, an industrious occupation/ business with orderliness, duty, beauty, etc.

WORK- *Aw-vad*

In Genesis we find yet another Hebrew word for WORK,"There was no man to 'work' in the ground (Gen 2:5)

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to WORK it and to TAKE CARE of it);

Here it relates to God's expectation of humankind to WORK and TAKE CARE of the Garden of Eden.



Mel-aw-kah - Work as an expression of 'let there be' Faith



Aw-vad - Work as expressions of worship

The word Aw-vad is a verb in Hebrew and is used 288 times in the Hebrew Old Testament.

Prominent usages are like

- ✓ Genesis: 2:5,15, 3:23; Working in the ground like **TILLING**
- ✓ Genesis 14:4, 15:13,14, 25:23; 27:40: - **Working for (Serving)** a stronger person/ king / Deity
- ✓ Exodus 20:9- Six days shall thou **labour** and work
- ✓ Exodus 7:16; 8:1; 8:20; 9:13; 10:3; 10:7; 10:8; 10:11; 10:24; Let My people Go, so that they may **SERVE / Worship** Me(the LORD)
- ✓ Exodus 23: 24 / Deut 5:9: - Not to bow down to their gods, nor **SERVE/WORSHIP** them
- ✓ Joshua 24:15: - As for me and my household we will **SERVE/ Worship** the Lord
- ✓ Psalm 2:11, 18:43; 2:30; 72:11; 97:7; 100:2: - **SERVE/WORSHIP** (like Serve the Lord with

gladness and worship the Lord with gladness interchangeably used)

It is a foundational verb that is inter connected and used with **TILLING, WORKING- SERVING- WORSHIPPING.**

Work/Aw-vad is an offering in worship to the Creator *Yahweh* God.

Our noble call to WORK – SIX DAYS YOU SHALL WORK (Mel-ah-Kah) & LABOUR (Awwad) Exodus 20:9

- **Mel-aw-kah-** To work with God's gift (and power) of creativity in our segments -faith that will work, creating new things, through 6 days LET THERE BE!
- **Aw-vad-** To work – producing offerings of worship to God in our segments

Indeed, God wants to express His Mel-ah-kah creativity and power in the fields of our work and academics and that to emerge as offerings of worship (Av-wad) to the LORD, our creator.

In a world that is increasingly becoming a chaotic rubble, it is the Lord's expectation that His disciples will emerge as the salt that prevents the decay and light in darkness, to bring it to an order.

Let us define WORK as such an opportunity/expectation/ordination from God with His style

Lead

of “Let there be” Mel- *aw-kah* for His worship *Aw-vad* in and through us.

Work & Academics – Aren’t these made for each other?

Academics cannot be defined very easily. Here are a few definitions:

- Synthesizing the learnings from WORK, for training for future applications.
- Developing foundations for development of streams and segments
- Research to predict behaviors scientifically, to save time in the trials and errors at industry
- Researching to find breakthroughs for issues in different segments.
- Measuring the knowledge levels people acquire in / through trainings / research and grading it.

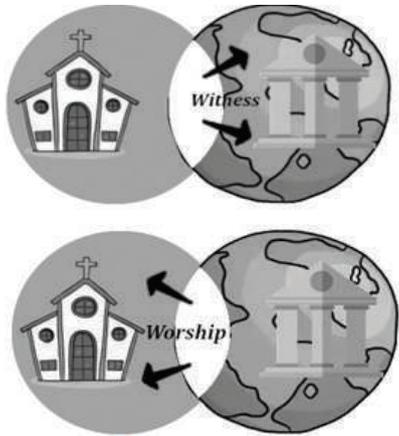
From these descriptions itself, it is obvious that WORK & ACADEMICS



are conceptually inseparable, existing for each other. There should be an intense integration.

Academics and the Legacy of Universities

The earliest universities (For eg; The University of Paris and the University of Oxford in the 1100s and several others that followed in Europe and elsewhere) was the work of God’s people, when they felt the need for deeper studies and



debates on the various disciplines. These universities used to function in a close association with the church. The relationship between the scholars in the church and the University was profound and intriguing. These universities not only became centres of theology, philosophy, and science, but also, became incubators of the Renaissance and the Reformation that followed in the world history.

In a sense, it was the scholars from the universities and the church together, that influenced the world further in its graduation from the medieval to the modern era. There can be debates on how much of 'saltiness' was there in the 'salt of the earth' at that time, yet history cannot deny the influence of several God's people in the Renaissance, Reformation, and the world's journey further towards the advancements that we find today.

Faith - Works - Academics Integration

The creation mandate to rule over (Gen 1:28), work and take care (Gen 2:15) of the creation calls us to explore the world and WORK (*Mel-ah-kah* and *Aw-vad*) fueled by Academics. Let us look at some examples from history.

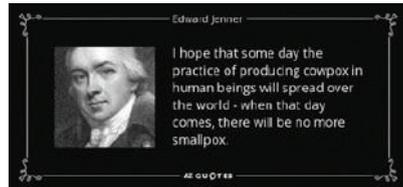


Sir Isaac Newton, hailed as the father of modern physics, was a Disciple of Christ. He firmly believed in God

and worshipped Him, deeply engaging in Physics, discovering and formulating the laws of motion, gravity and so on. He wrote many studies on the books of the Bible (studies on the prophetic books like Daniel and Revelation) alongside his thesis in Physics. It was not the secular and sacred sides of Newton's

life, but an integrated life. He drew his inspiration to engage in Physics as a quest to know more about God's creation and the physical laws that He set in place. Those became foundational to Academics in Physics. Is it an exaggeration to say that Sir Isaac Newton, worshipped the Lord of Physics with His discoveries in Physics (and Mathematics)?

Newton is the unit of Force; **Kelvin** unit of Temperature; **Joule** unit of Energy, **Ampere** Unit of Electric Current, **Pascal** unit of Pressure. These people who laid the foundation to academic



understanding in modern science, have one thing in common: their FAITH in God that propelled them to WORK, their findings, that propelled further progress in WORK in science today.

When SmallPox was killing thousands in Europe in 1790s, Edward Jenner, pioneered the concept of vaccines developing the smallpox vaccine, the world's first vaccine. His father, Pastor Samuel Jenner was burying hundreds in the city in pain. Edward Jenner sought

Lead

God's wisdom that led to the development of the world's first vaccine.



Even the terms

vaccine and vaccination are derived from *Variolae vaccinae* (smallpox of the cow), the term given by Jenner, who was often called "the father of immunology". In Jenner's time, smallpox killed around 10% of the population, with the number as high as 20% in towns and cities where infection spread more easily. Today it's an eradicated disease, thanks to His mel-ah-kah research and discovery, one of his expressions of worship.

The year Edward went to be with the Lord in 1823, Louis Pasteur was born. He built the microbiology world further, with his deep faith in God. Here are a few quotes from Louis Pasteur,

"Posterity will one day laugh at the foolishness of materialistic philosophers. The more I study nature, the more I stand amazed at the work of the Creator." "Science brings men nearer to God." I pray when I am engaged at my work at the laboratory" Louis Pasteur as quoted in *Literary Digest* (1902)

The inter connectedness of FAITH-WORKS- ACADEMICS is illustrated well in this. By FAITH, Louis pursued

expressions of God's wisdom in his field of microbiology. Here's another stunning statement by Louis Pasteur;

"The Greeks have given us one of the most beautiful word in our language, the word ENTHUSIASM- God within. The grandeur of the acts of men are measured by the inspiration from which they spring from, Happy is he who bears God within" So, the "fathering" of microbiology with researches and inventions that will save and serve humankind, was the work Louis did, processed by God, *en-theos*. Can our WORK & ACADEMICS be *en-theos*?

Back to the world of three gaps?

Despite these models in history of active integration of FAITH-WORK-ACADEMICS, we often forget that the fields that we work with are created by God for His glory. The God of the Bible is the owner of the fields of our work engagement/our studies. May it be Pure Sciences, Applied Sciences, Banking, Economics, Commerce, Art, Literature, Culture, Law, Music, Design, History, Politics, and so on, He is the author and owner of these domains. He created these with His great plans and purposes as described in the Scripture right from Genesis. *For by Him all things were created – **things in heaven and on earth** – visible and invisible....*

All things were created by Him and for Him ... In Him all things hold together. (Col: 3: 16-17).

Conclusion: -faith@work.edu :-

So many things in the industry and in academics are now not in accordance with God's purposes and His plans for the future.

Rays of Hope?

As I continued my journeying through Central India, I met Ashish and his College senior Deepthi (both names changed). They were born and brought up in the very killer fields of farmer suicides. They met during their student days and are among 10 college friends now leading a Farmer Producer Company with over 400 farmers from villages nearby as their share holders

Coming from farmer families they knew the pain of their world. And their college had several rural immersions to live and discuss the field issues

Ashish thought its mental health issues that aggravate the issue. And managed to do a masters in Mental Health. Deepthi and the others were listing their findings like the falls in commercial practices or lack of access to agri and other technologies, shying to reach the needy places.

The brief time that I could spend with the young band, fueled up energy in my systems. Yes, mercy drops round us are falling.

A question to ponder

If faith and prayer fuels academia and industry, what a synergy will it be?

Humankind with their sinful nature has corrupted these fields by their fallen priorities. However, God in His mercy, accounted for its redemption as we see in the mission of Christ "For God was pleased to have His fullness dwell in Him (Christ) and through Him reconcile to Himself ALL things- whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross." (Col: 3: 19-20). The need for redemption of the fields of our studies /work engagements is now more than ever.

As people of God in industry and academics, we should work/study/research seeking God's mind in our fields. As we pray and groan in our fields with their pain points, God will reveal His further plans with Mel-ah-kah – Let there be this kind of work, that would also be Av-wad kind of worship. Surely better and Godly things will emerge as a result

For instance, while studying Economics, praying to God, seeking wisdom to tackle the current world issues like poverty, unemployment, price rise, inflation etc, God will reveal better ideas- in line with His eternal purposes (Amos 3:7)

Throughout the landscape of human history, we find how God dealt with people on a variety of issues in their daily walks and challenges of their times. If studied



Lead

in its context with prayers, we can get insights and answers to the problems in our contexts, our fields of studies and engagements too.

Let our WORK and ACADEMICS be expositions of our FAITH in God. Beyond innovations, inno-visions will emerge when followers of Christ WORK with Let there be- Mel-ah-Kah" in Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Political Science, Law, Engineering and so on.

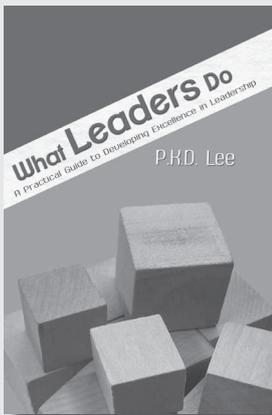


Reji & Betsy make their home in Pune and are blessed with two children; daughter Monica is a lawyer, and son Roshan is a Social Science Student. The family cherishes friendships, open home, discussions on contemporary topics, organic terrace farming, creative healthy cooking and lots of baking.

Reji, a sustainability professional is currently working as Head- Sustainable Banking at ESAF SMALL FINANCE BANK

Actively involved in UESI since his student days in 1980s, Reji now serves in the IFES Board as South Asia Regional Representative (Hon)

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Studious Believers

Academia is a beautiful world where faculty and students interact and learn from each other. Faculty members in the digital world are not only expected to be facilitators but also to be mentors. Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Humanities and Professional courses are offered at college and university levels to prepare students to face the real world with confidence.

Academics cater only to the intellectual or cognitive side of the students. Faith, on the other hand, holds all other aspects together such as morality, emotions and spirituality. In the academic world driven by technology, it is evident that most of the students and faculty members neglect their physical and mental health wellbeing.

Believing in Christ's finished work on the cross and living for God's glory is essential for the children of God redeemed by the blood of Lord Jesus Christ. When a believing student excels in studies, he glorifies God through his studies. Similarly, when a professor teaches the subject well, he brings glory to our Father in heaven through his teaching career. Hence academics and faith should not be treated separately. This is our Heavenly Father's world and whatever subjects we study and do research, the Lord God would grant His wisdom, knowledge and understanding to grasp the subject matter easily.

We go to schools and colleges to acquire knowledge. But wisdom comes from the Lord. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God,

who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

We might face opposition and ridicule in the places of our study and work for Jesus’ name’s sake, but our eyes should be fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Whenever we are challenged and targeted for our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we should always be

prepared to give an answer with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

In 1 Thessalonians 4:11 & 12, we read that we should make it our ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind our own business and to work with our hands so that our daily life would enable us to win the respect of outsiders. To put it in simple words, whatever we do, we should do it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).



Carolyn Samuel teaches English at St. Francis College for Women. She lives with her husband Godson Samuel in Hyderabad.

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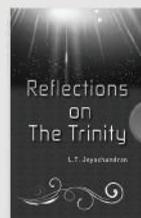
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One of the more pleasant side effects of the coronavirus induced immobility is the opportunity to spend time re-visiting books and films one had forgotten.

The film *Educating Rita* (1983), with Julie Walters and Michael Caine, is one of those films I wish all university students could watch in their first year of studies. It would remind them of the privilege, let alone the responsibility, of acquiring knowledge. On the one hand, the story is a re-hash of the Pygmalion plot (immortalized in George Bernard Shaw's play of the same name and the musical *My Fair Lady*): a vivacious, lower-class girl's relationship with her staid, upper-class mentor. On the other hand, this is no sentimental romance. It is far funnier, more moving and intellectually stimulating than any precursor.

Rita is a 27-year old hairdresser whose husband and working-class family cannot understand her passion for a higher education. She refuses to have a baby until she has "discovered herself", as she puts it, and therefore can choose her life's path rather than be pushed along by social convention. She enrolls in an Open University course in English literature and has, as her tutor, an alcoholic professor who is also a disillusioned poet, one who has lost all interest in teaching and whose life is falling apart. Rita's own marriage breaks up as her husband, seeing Rita's new-found love for Chekov and Shakespeare as a threat to his dreams of fatherhood, burns her books and walks away. There follows a mutually transforming, yet asexual (because this is not Hollywood), relationship between Rita and her professor.

Such a relationship of a student changing a teacher and them

learning together about life is perhaps more likely to arise in the study of the Humanities (literature, philosophy, history, art, theology) than in the natural/ social sciences and professional disciplines, because the subject matter is less in the “control” of the teacher and invites personal reflection on the bigger issues of our common humanity. And, of course, the kind of relationship between Rita and her tutor is not possible in the large classrooms of the typical industrial-age university or the virtual classrooms of the current information-age.

There are many professors like Rita’s in our universities, including the most famous. Not only have excessive workloads, bored students, and increasing competition made university teaching lose its thrall for many, but the lack of a coherent worldview within which to discover the meaning and value of one’s subject has a corroding effect on morale.

In recent years, the more far-seeing university administrators and academics have promoted more inter-disciplinary courses and research programs, as most of the challenges facing humanity, from global warming to technology run amok and widening social inequities, require a multi-dimensional approach. Cultivating

wisdom is what we need, in whatever profession, and not the mere accumulation of information.

Contrast this with Jerome Kagan (a former President of Harvard)’s dispirited observation: “Too often the undergraduate years resemble a bus tour through a beautiful countryside where the purpose is not to admire the scenery but to keep the tour on schedule. The new understanding was that college students were hotel guests choosing from a variety of intellectual diversions with no purpose other than career preparation directed by a diverse faculty of reasonably well treated employees.”

This is why the current worldwide trend in university education of seeing learning and scholarship as merely a means to employment and economic growth, coupled with the shutting down or scaling back of Humanities departments, is disastrous. It destroys the possibility of any independent critique of government and corporate hegemony, as the Humanities are the soil in which independent, critical thought is most naturally nurtured. As universities become mere tuition factories, churning out products for the marketplace, they encourage a society of super-educated morons.

In such a crassly consumerist world, the acting profession will

be deprived of actors like Julie Walters and Michael Caine, both of whom came from working-class homes. And working-class folk like Rita will never be able to afford a college education; but, once in college, there is a real possibility of their minds never being awakened but remaining self-enclosed. Yet, paradoxically, if change is to come to our universities, most likely it will not be from the ranks of the social elite, and even the elite universities which are bastions of the status quo, but from rare individuals like Rita who help others awaken to life with all its everyday joys and cruelties.

The current pandemic has seen a resurgence of online courses. This has been inevitable, but it has played into the hands of those who want to turn all universities into financially lucrative virtual spaces even in the post-pandemic age. However, both before and since the pandemic, the severe limitations of online learning were becoming apparent to perceptive observers in the academy. Sherry Turkle, the renowned sociologist of technology at MIT, quoted the director of a Columbia University study that

compared online and face-to-face learning: "The most important thing [the study concluded] that helps students succeed in an online course is interpersonal interaction and support." (*Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*). "What makes the greatest impression in a college education," writes Turkle, "is learning how to think like someone else, appreciating an intellectual personality, and thinking about what it might mean to have one of your own." For that, person-to-person encounter is indispensable.

Furthermore, Professor Las Back, in his *Academic Diary*, raises the question, "In the age of Google Scholar, aren't libraries at risk of becoming a bit of an anachronism? Reading matters comes to our screens faster than any book ever could. Why do we need a library when, with the right log-in, we have almost immediate access to the world library online?" He answers his own question thus: "All this misses the point of libraries because they provide not only a refuge but places of serendipity, where we discover routinely things we are not looking for."



Vinoth Ramachandra lives in Sri Lanka, currently serving as the Secretary for Dialogue and Social Engagement for IFES. His academic training was in nuclear engineering, but has always read voraciously in many other disciplines. He is also an author and his latest book is *Sarah's Laughter: Doubt, Tears and Christian Hope* (Langham, 2020) on the theme of suffering and lament.





The Essence of Excellence

Introduction

Espirit de corps or comradeship is some of the buzz words depicting a form of closeness, oneness, and togetherness in human relationships. Following Christ means love, righteousness, service, and these can only be achieved and expressed through relationships. That's why Billy Graham Says "Christianity is a religion of fellowship". UESI has therefore a biblical pursuit in having its Aim on fellowship.

In an objective sense, faith means the body of truth which God has revealed. It is the sum of Christian teaching. A person who holds this mentioned faith is often known as

an 'Evangelical' that is the reason we call ourselves Evangelical students/ graduates. Evangelicals are followers of the Bible, having born-again experience, careful about their life, pursuing good works and, living a life above reproach.

The body of Jesus' followers as a whole is the community of the "called-out ones" (the origin of the ecclesia, the Greek word for church). As Paul wrote the followers of Christ in the little town of Colosse, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."

Not only is every believer called to Christ, but we are also all called to play a part in God's mission in

the world. Throughout the Bible, God has called his people both to enjoy being with him and to join with him in his global mission wherever we are and whatever we are. Sometimes God may call us to a particular area of ministry. Youth, Children, Village, Tribal ministry, Professional ministries like Doctors, Nurses, Lawyers, Engineers, and Teachers. As followers of Christ, we also have to show excellence, which is also service unto God.

The Essence of Excellence

Excellence in academics may not be always the same as success in studies or professions. "Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value," said Albert Einstein. People appreciate excellence, like things that are excellent whether that is Samsung or Nokia. People have an appetite for excellence and pursue excellence, that's why today we have TCS, Infosys, Microsoft, Del, Wipro, as icons of professional Excellency and IIMs, IITs, XLRI, AIIMS, CMC, AFMC as symbols of academic excellence.

---whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable --- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. - Phil 4:8

But eagerly desire the greater gifts, and now I will show you the most excellent way - I Cor. 12:31

To strive for excellence means to do our best, and to be content to leave the rest to God; to strive for excellence means to live at peace with God, knowing that we are giving with His help – our best efforts; to use our gifts to the best of our ability, but ultimately putting people first; to work like this "whatever you do, work it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" Col 3:23 to humble dependence on God for our abilities, strength, and results and to give Him glory; to live in contentment and peace, knowing that God is pleased because we are working for Him and doing our best.

No doubt our God is God of our personal life and professional life. Those who excel, work with enthusiasm (Col. 3:23), sharpen their skills (Ecc. 10:10) Developing, growing, learning & improving their skills for His glory. People who excel keep their word (Prov. 20:6) maintain a positive attitude (Phil. 2:14-15; Ecc. 10:4), and do more than that is expected. (Mt. 5:41). The world needs a new vision focussing on health than the economy, on people than processes, on the mission than money, stewardship than ownership, leadership than



authority, and on relationships than religion. We know that without faith, without depending on God it is impossible to please God. Faith is an important element in Christian life. There is no exaggeration that our faith should be shown in our conduct and our academics or profession.

The Entrust of Excellence

God has entrusted these magnificent tools to all who bear His image, and we are called to use them for our good and His glory. It is disconcerting that many--perhaps most--of the world's leading scholars fail to see or acknowledge the deep story that grounds their work and gives it meaning. But God still uses these brilliant minds--even in their rebellion--to carry forth His purposes in the world. And they praise Him unwittingly. In turn, we have every reason to praise God when we have the privilege to observe a well-crafted essay, an elegantly formulated economic equation, a deftly engineered machine, or carefully constructed ethnography. Even if the hands and the brains behind these wonders have no interest in the things of God, these works bear something of His goodness and His beauty.

Academic disciplines are not merely bodies of knowledge and

- ◆ *People who excel, work with enthusiasm (Col. 3:23)*
- ◆ *People who excel, sharpen their skills (Ecc. 10:10) Developing, growing, learning & improving*
- ◆ *People who excel, keep their word (Ps. 15:4)*
- ◆ *Reliability beats talent in the long run*
- ◆ *People who excel maintain a positive attitude (Phil. 2:14-15; Ecc. 10:4)*
- ◆ *People who excel, do more than that what is expected. (Mt. 5: 41)*

skills. They also rely on and help advance certain kinds of virtues. It's easy to forget about these underlying virtues when we think about studying algebra or doing our Spanish homework, but good disciplinary practices are impossible without them: humility in the face of vast and complicated data; charity when encountering new or objectionable ideas; honesty as we discover results that don't fit our presuppositions; courage to ask difficult questions, to face ridicule or antagonism for upholding unpopular or unexpected conclusions, and to change one's mind; compassion in the face of human suffering and cruelty; patience when working on projects with people who are irritating or lazy; and diligence as we face a long

semester filled with a pile of difficult assignments that seem beyond our ability to complete. To showcase our faith, some of the examples we must live as:

Holy as a Saint (Rom 1:7, 1 Cor 1:2)

Pungent as a Salt (Mat 5:13)

True as a Light (5:14)

Legible as an Epistle (2 Cor 3:2)

Valiant as a Soldier (2 Tim 2:3)

Obedient as a Child (1 Pet 1: 14, 15)

Conclusion

Excellence invariably is born out of discipline. Excellence is about choice-making. Every moment of every day we are in a decision making process. The quality of a

person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor. We should remember God is the origin of our excellence because he is excellent in his being. Excellence is service unto God, which makes work praise worthy (Mt 5:16) we are to live in such a way that our work becomes praiseworthy Let us remember in His big picture everything is in perfect alignment. His ways are beyond our limited ability to understand and to trace. May the Lord help us to equip and enable us to serve Church and Society for the extension of His kingdom through our academics/profession.



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Shining stars in Campuses

As students some of the questions we might have faced are (within ourselves or from fellow believing students) - should I be serious about my studies? Should not I be spending more time in witnessing and in organizing Bible studies than for my studies? These are sincere and serious questions, which deserve answers.

The above questions and confusions arise because we assume that our faith is in direct conflict with our studies or work. Stretching it further, we may argue that our fellowship meetings, Bible studies, or church services are far more important than our routine

study or work which at times might be boring or require a lot of time and effort from our side.

As students, it is crucial to have the right attitude towards our studies and work. Else, we would do a big disservice to the kingdom of God and in turn, bring dishonor to God's name. It is important to realize that we were not the first ones who had these confusions. Down the centuries many wrestled with these questions. The scripture gives us lots of principles on the aspect of work thereby giving us insights on integrating our faith with studies and profession/work. On the aspect of relating faith to what we do,

three wonderful examples stand out in the Old Testament – Joseph, Nehemiah, and Daniel. All these three men had pagan kings as their masters. But the influence they had on their masters was remarkable. All of them had very crucial roles to play, and that too in very difficult circumstances. Their masters realized that the secret behind their wisdom and excellence was their living faith and their close relationship with the LORD God.

Let us first look at the aspect of work and then consider a few basic principles from the Bible for our student lives to help us integrate our faith with our studies.

1. Work was instituted before the fall

Gen 2:15 reads “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” So, we see that as per God’s original plan, Adam was expected to put in regular time and effort every day to take care of the Garden of Eden. Often, students think that work was a result of the curse. Again, we see in the Ten Commandments the aspect of work. Exo 20:8,9 reads “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work,..” This verse emphasizes the aspect of putting in hard work in all that we

do – not just a casual attitude. The way we do our work tells a lot about our faith.

2. Do Everything for the glory of God

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1 Cor 10: 31-NIV. Once we are convinced that we are expected to do our studies or work seriously, the next question is – what drives or motivates us? Unfortunately, many students pursue studies for the sole purpose of earning a good salary. Our society – newspapers, media, elders, parents, and sometimes even our fellow believers might give us the wrong kind of motivation to excel in our studies. What is wrong with these attitudes? Money is not bad, but the love of money certainly is fatal. Jesus warned his disciples and told them “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. This aspect of the love of money is one of the major pitfalls for many students. The best way to counter this is to ‘love the Lord with all your heart’. Our heart is the place of all our affections and desires. So let us make sure all the days of our life that our motivation for all that we are involved in – whether our studies or Bible studies or church or any other activity in our life is to glorify God and to please Him.



Once we are convinced that whatever we do is for God's glory, we will no longer take credit for the results. Instead, we would put in the very best efforts, leaving the results to God. Just like there is no place for any type of boasting, there should also not be any place for feeling dejected or depressed when we find our studies or work challenging. We can say with Apostle Paul "I can do everything through him (Christ) who gives me strength" Phil 4:13 NIV. Remember, the source of all wisdom is God's Spirit, and He is abiding within us to help us and to enable us to do all that is pleasing to the Lord.

3. We are Serving the Lord Christ

Once our motivation to study or to be involved in any work or activity is to bring glory to God, then our accountability is primarily to God. Apostle Paul wrote to the slaves in the church at Colossae "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" Col 3:23, 24. This verse is equally applicable to all of us, and all the more to students. What a privilege to realize that we are studying for the Lord! When we feel tired or dejected, we can take comfort in the assurance that I am

servicing the Lord Christ. Hence, all the power and enablement of the Holy Spirit is available to us. Our duty is to ask the Lord for wisdom and then do our very best.

4. Let your Light shine (Striving for Excellence)

Daniel's life is a wonderful example of excellence. Daniel's opponents tried hard to find something wrong in Daniel's conduct or work. Dan 6:4b says "They could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy and neither negligent nor corrupt." What a testimony – neither negligent nor corrupt! One common mistake we often make is to be over careful about avoiding corruption, but being not so careful about negligence. Often we as Christians are guilty of this sin of omission. Therefore, as a student we should never be negligent in our studies.

Dan 6:3 says "Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and satraps by exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom." Later when Daniel's opponents plotted and finally could get him thrown into the Lions' den, we find King Darius so sad. It is amazing to see the way King Darius addressed him (the King must have been sure that Daniel's God has

rescued him from the lions) in Dan 6:20 as, “Daniel, servant of the living God. ...”. What a testimony – Daniel’s master calling him as the servant of the living God!

God’s call to each one of us is to be a Daniel in our respective places so that our Lord’s name is honored and glorified. Jesus told his disciples “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”.

5. Integrating Engineering Studies with Faith

Many of our students are Engineering students. Engineering is an excellent area where students can excel and be light and salt, thereby bringing so much difference. Engineering teaches problem-solving skills and also ways by which theoretical ideas can be converted to practical reality. As a student, you would be able to use your God-given creativity and innovation in applying your engineering knowledge for useful products or solutions. We need to take our laboratory training very seriously, which is very often forgotten. This is one of the major challenges of engineering education in India. Our country needs committed engineers in all areas to bring quality solutions to the many problems. Be an example

to your fellow students in applying skills for the betterment of societal needs.

God has blessed many of us with a sound mind and good intelligence. Consider during higher studies to make an impact in your field. Our country desperately needs committed Christian scientists and engineers to shine for the Lord in their areas, especially out in the field.

5. Be a good student of the world and the word

As a student always remember that we are very privileged, especially in our country. God in his sovereign will has given us this great opportunity to be a student to explore and learn His world and His creation. So never belittle your call as a student. Many of my seniors challenged me to be ‘a student of the Bible and of the World’ or in other words ‘a good student of the Word and the world’.

God has put you in your college as salt to redeem your college and also your discipline of study. So whatever your discipline of study is, ask God’s Spirit to open your understanding to the greater truths of the Bible, so that you could learn how to be a redeeming/transforming agent in your area of study. Take time to read the biographies of Christian missionaries, scientists, doctors,



social reformers, and writers, who took their faith seriously and made such an influence in their society. It is worth reading the biographies of William Carey, John Newton, William Wilberforce, Dr. Edward Jenner, Dr Paul Brand, James Clerk Maxwell, CS Lewis, and others.

In closing, may the God of all wisdom fill us with such wisdom and insight that we become a transformational agent in our college, in our fellowship, and in our church.



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Bridge the Gap



"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"

Abraham Kuyper, one of the most prolific Christian thinkers and the former Prime Minister of the Netherlands is known to have said this in a speech on the occasion of opening the Free University in Amsterdam in 1880. In just a line, Kuyper highlights how all our pursuits and endeavours are subsumed under God's sovereignty and this includes the pursuits of knowledge and learning in a university. In other words, the often-perceived divide between the secular and the spiritual is a dichotomy that has been created by us. In recent years, the chasm between the two seem to have widened even more as absolutes

and religiosity of any kind are often viewed with suspicion in academic spaces defined by post modernism and secular humanism. Kuyper's definition of what a university should be, sadly, no longer identifies with the ethos of academic institutions in the contemporary world.

Coming closer to home, it is not surprising to see how the divide between the secular and theological spaces are very stark. We have excellent theological students who have very little idea of the secular world and brilliant secular academicians who take no interest in their faith. Religion for most

people is just an identity that they are born into and nothing more. Given that God is sovereign over all aspects of our existence—including the secular and the spiritual, there is a need to bridge the gap between the two and reconcile both spheres through integration of faith and academics.

When I joined university ten years ago, the buzz word in the evangelical circles was “integration” of faith and academics. I was located not only in the learning hub of the city in North Delhi but also witnessed strong student evangelical movements flourishing in the campus. The concept was very new and fascinating to me. One of the things that had a profound impact on my life as a research student was this concept where we were constantly encouraged to strive towards making what we believe shape the way we look at academics and our discipline. Much of what I have done as part of my research journey has been defined by what I learnt during my college days.

However, looking back, there is also a realization that it could have gone beyond our little Bible study circles in the corners of the campus and attempting to invite friends to our Bible studies. Most of our Bible studies were confined to what Terence Halliday calls the “pietistic

model”. Unfortunately, integration of faith and academics did not give us a vocabulary or empower us to engage with classroom discussions with professors and peers and would be often left stumped when asked difficult questions.

College is the most fertile period of intellectual growth where opinions and worldviews are formed. It is at this phase that Christian students must be equipped to become a medium to connect the secular with the spiritual. Prof. John Wyatt in a podcast on effective reading talks about the importance of reading broadly and widely across various disciplines that encompass both the secular and the theological to strike a wholesome balance. Understanding the foundational tenets of doctrines is as important as decoding the ontological basis of secular philosophies for faith to engage effectively with academics.

I remember a heated debate between a staff worker and a student in one of our Bible study sessions in college on the interpretation of the verse in Matthew 6:33, “Seek ye first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” The staff said that we should give priority to our studies without “wasting” too much of our time in our Bible studies because that is what our primary duty

and calling are as students in the university. The student debated that studying Scriptures should be given primary importance because that is what the verse seems to be suggesting—to put our godly pursuits above all things. Perhaps it would have been settled quickly if someone intervened and said that it is not a case of either/or but rather should be taken as a whole unit, each equal in its importance. Dr Jay Green, a history professor in an essay on academics and faith writes, “These (academic disciplines and practices) are sophisticated and time-honoured crafts. When they’re practiced wisely, they hold enormous potential for cultivating a deeper love for God and our neighbours.” Such should be the symbiotic relationship that faith and academics share, each enriching the other by uncovering truths previously unknown.

Christian teachers in the university will have to not only play an important role but also take responsibility in engaging faith and academics intently. I have been working as a teacher of English Literature for the last three years and it dawned on me that much of what is being taught about the Christian faith in the classrooms are distorted, incomplete and misappropriated. Humanities courses like English Literature heavily rely on concepts

and ethics borrowed from the Bible and regardless of a person’s faith or disbelief in a higher power, one has to engage with the Bible. On the other hand, we have Christian teachers who could not care less. In a recent conversation with a friend who also teaches in the university, she expressed how she finds academic theories much more liberating than her Christian faith because all religion does is oppress. Perhaps this is a cause of alarm and concern and also a call for faithful Christian teachers to join the university in order to reclaim the lost narrative of the Gospel and present it accurately.

To conclude, I would like to bring out four reasons why integration of faith and academics is important. First is for the simple reason that academia needs to be redeemed for the glory of God so that the universities live up to the purpose it exists for. The fallenness of the world extends to all spheres of our being and academia is no different.

The second reason is to bring real solutions to real issues. We often talk about how the Bible holds the answers to everything, to all the problems in this world. It would then make sense only if we are able to unveil the truths of the Scriptures and make them relevant to the issues that plague



our contemporary world. The Bible on one hand and the newspaper on the other as the famous 20th century theologian Karl Barth said should be our *modus operandi*.

Thirdly, to produce not only good but compassionate thinkers. The academic world is flooded with intellectuals who are comfortably seated in their ivory towers completely disconnected from the rest of the world. A colleague of mine quipped that the most well-known economists who often makes policies have no idea about the price of *bhindi* or *aloo* in the *sabzimandi*. As Christians by faith, we are also called to not only be thinkers but be salt and light, to be hands and feet wherever we are placed to serve. A healthy integration of academics and faith would enable us to interpret the societies we live in with more empathy, identity issues and work towards mitigating issues and solving problems.

Last but not the least, to be effective witnesses, we need to be good Christian scholars and intellectuals in every sense of the word. How are

we to reach out to students and to faculty members if we do not speak in the language that they do? On the campus where the sceptres of Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Zizek and the like looms large, how can we make the Gospel relevant if we do not understand the worldviews that have shaped them?

I would like to end by rephrasing the challenge that Terence Halliday posed—“What would a 21st century vision be for *UESI* if Christ and Christians are really, actually and to be observably engaging the whole university for Christ?” We must work out the answers ourselves to this question for our universities and institutions of higher learning.

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Themes for Campus Link - 2022

▶ **Jan-Feb 2022: Facing the New Normal**

Articles to be submitted by 20th December 2021

▶ **Mar-Apr 2022: Career specific Skills**

Articles to be submitted by 20th February 2022

▶ **May-Jun 2022: Campus Engagement**

Articles to be submitted by 20th April 2022

▶ **July-Aug 2022: Work vs Vocation**

Articles to be submitted by 20th June 2022

Word limit - Article = 1400 words maximum,
Poem = 16 lines maximum

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Faith Steps in Academics



To quote the Holy Bible, 'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see' (Hebrews 11:1). Integration of faith and academia is a domain that has already been researched, but there are more dimensions to be uncovered. Faith has a massive role to play, especially in a believer's life coupled with academics.

A testimony about how trust in Jesus Christ and surrendering to Him changed my life - Despite being born and raised in a Christian home and always having a relationship with Jesus, I never felt compelled to share the gospel with others. I had

the privilege to be a part of TKM EU throughout my B Tech days at the TKM College of Engineering, Kollam. I was able to manage academics and extracurricular activities well, and as a result, I was elected as the 2017's Batch Representative. Soon enough, the time I had was snatched away for numerous activities and academics, making it nearly impossible for me to attend prayer meetings. Even though I had a good personal relationship with Jesus and was encouraged to share the gospel at our EU meetings, I still lacked the motivation to tell others about this loving heavenly Father. I always deluded myself

into believing that proclaiming the gospel was not my calling because I was afraid of hurting others' sentiments. My conscience was stained with shame because I knew I was hurting God's feelings every time I ran away from his calling.

During my final year of university, I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the State Conference in Tiruvalla. The memory of me stepping out to the front and declaring myself a "student missionary" during the last worship session was puzzling, because I was already placed in a reputable organization with no plans to pursue higher education at that time. Today, though, I am certain that the Holy Spirit's mysterious imprints have touched me. Following the completion of the course, I enrolled in GATE exam preparation in Calicut. Even though I put on a brave face, I was emotionally drained and depressed those days. But, God was faithful, always! God used Sali Aunty, the cook in the hostel where I resided, to revoke the purpose of my calling. After listening to her Christ experiences every day evening in her small room, I wanted to win souls for heaven for the first time. I had heard hundreds of sermons, attended many camps, meetings, and workshops, yet for the first time, I wanted to conquer souls for

heaven. During those trying times, I was profoundly inspired by the late Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke's messages and testimonies. I began to make an effort to bring Jesus into my friends' conversations. I eagerly desired to place my youth in the Lord's disposal, waiting for his guidance as I progressed through life.

When it came to M Tech admissions, I could see God's providence at work. I was accepted into IIT Madras' MS course as well as a reputable NIT's M Tech programme. My family was going through a financial crisis and an emotional breakdown at the time, so I was unable to participate that year, which discouraged me. Miraculously, I was able to get a job as a Guest Lecturer at a Government Polytechnic College where my Father was teaching at the time, and I witnessed the Lord's healing hands wash away all of my family's troubles. That one year was one of the most stress-free and enjoyable periods of my life. I loved teaching so much that I didn't want to return for M Tech, completely forgetting my pledge to God about being a missionary student. God never forgets our promises, even if we do! I reapplied for M Tech at various IITs and NITs, including institutions to which I had not applied the previous year, due to parental pressure. I was hesitant to go to IIT Bhubaneswar,



Odisha, because of the Fani storm that ravaged the area during that time. I promised God that I would only travel to Bhubaneswar provided train tickets were available, which proved tough to come by as the deadline approached. While I was checking, I was surprised to see a solitary seat in the ladies quota. It didn't take me long to realise that was God's plan, and my written test and interview went far better than I had anticipated. No human eye has ever seen, no human ear has ever heard, and no human mind has ever conceived of God's means and designs.

I joined IIT Bhubaneswar, clearly seeking God's purpose, only to discover that this environment was not ready for me. From a damaged new mobile phone to an accident requiring major surgery for ligament fracture, I lasted only two months of the first semester. Despite my inability to comprehend God's plan, I did not doubt his purpose in my life, which allowed me to navigate the recuperation and healing process more smoothly than I had hoped. I returned to the second semester with a first semester lag, yet God blessed my

academics tremendously, despite the fact that I did not complete my first semester. EU at IIT Bhubaneswar was like a refreshing break in a barren country, nourishing the soul. The testimonies of Sis. Deena and Bro. Binu filled me and Maria with hope, encouraging us to pray for each other's burning flames here and to rekindle the sparks of faith that had vanished. I am currently in my fourth semester and am eager to see what God has in store for me. During these trying times, there were moments of despair, melancholy, and anxiety, but I know now that I am an instrument for the Lord, and the blanket of love, faith, and hope that he wraps around me is more than enough. Everyday offers a series of new challenges but putting use of God's words along with the guidance of the Holy Spirit helps to evade each obstacle.

Every time I feel like giving up, this verse resonates within me, 'Remember your Creator in the days of your youth' as well as the over pouring jar of grace, mercy, faithfulness and love that conquered heaven, to be called his very own children and preparing an eternity to finally reunite with us.



Sruthi V. Roy graduated from TKM College of Engineering in Kollam with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and currently pursuing a master's degree in environmental engineering at IIT Bhubaneswar.

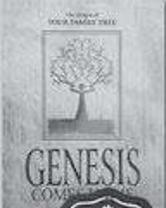
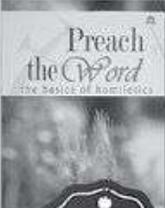
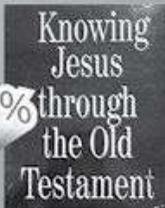
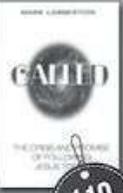
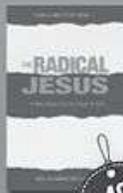
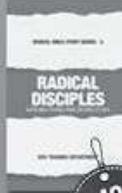
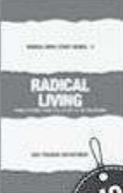
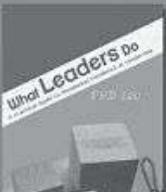
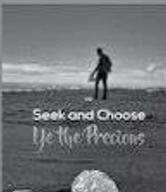
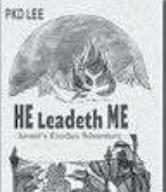
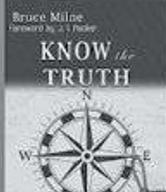
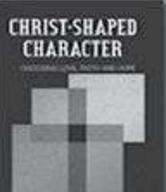
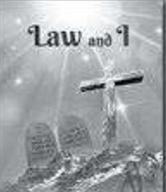
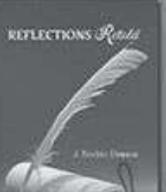
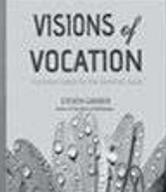


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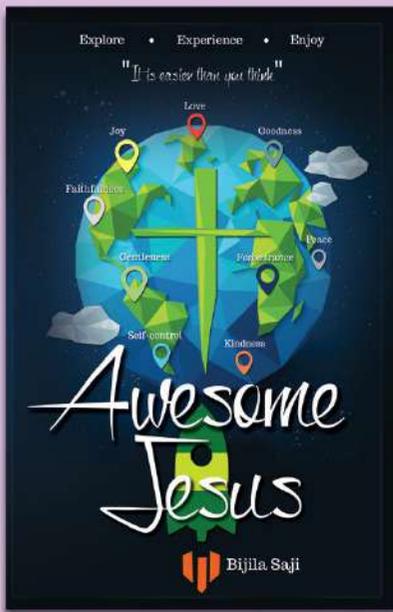


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Life is a journey. Our life journey started when a cell from our father's body united with a cell from our mother's body to become one unique cell. The first part of our journey was when we were in the secret and safe place of our mother's womb, being transformed from that one cell into a unique person in human history with a DNA that never existed before, nor will be repeated ever again in the future! The amazing fact is that we are one of a kind, unique and very special!

"Awesome Jesus", is an invitation to a journey of discovery. This book is both timely and necessary. In this present age there is a desperate longing for something lasting and meaningful. Hearts are hungry for God. By sharing her own story and pointing us to Jesus and God's Word, Bijila has simplified the way to find God. The journey itself is full of exciting discoveries. "You will seek me and find Me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 29: 13-14). I pray and believe that many will start a love relationship with their Creator as a result of reading this book. Bon Voyage!. **Alice Neumann, Editor**

Copies available at

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