



Global Faculty Initiative

**The Faculty Initiative
seeks to promote the integration
of Christian faith and academic disciplines
by bringing theologians into conversation with scholars
across the spectrum of faculties
in research universities
worldwide.**

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Disciplinary Responses to Theology Brief Preview

DUTIES OF LOVE IN THE RESEARCH LAB

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Much of science research involves a complex web of relationships, both among scientists within a research group in a lab and with collaborators in labs in other institutions around the world. The discussion of the Sovereignty of Love reminded me of a conversation I had with a Chinese Professor when I was visiting her lab in China last month. We were discussing the challenges of creating a community of people working together in our research groups from a set of highly driven, competitive, individual students. These students often arrive in the research world from an exam-based culture in which each individual strives for her or his own success. They need to learn how to contribute to something larger than just their own work and how to support the research of others in collaboration. These are things we try, to some extent, to explain and teach, and also to model ourselves.

However, something more is needed for a research group to thrive and that is a commitment to the duties of love. In my understanding, those duties in the lab could include offering to help a lab colleague with an unusually high work load even if the work would have no benefit to your own research project or it could include taking time to give a collaborator advice in an area which is not connected to your joint research but where you have expertise. A key feature is making sure you recognise all those in your lab as whole people and not just as scientific workers. This is particularly important when a student is underperforming and disrupting or distracting the work of others. Here, many might view this merely as a problem to be solved. However, recognising this student as a precious person, made in the image of God, may not change the outcome but will make a difference in your heart's attitude and the manner in which you address the situation.

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