



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.**

www.globalfacultyinitiative.net

LEADER GUIDE | MODULE 0 | INTEGRATING FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Session Objectives

1. To identify challenges faced by academics to integrate faith and learning
2. To apply this to many spheres of academic work
3. To imagine how and where Christian academics might have an impact on their fields and institutions

Reading

The Global Faculty Initiative – [Mission](#) [2 minutes to read]

The Global Faculty Initiative – [Our Call](#) [4 minutes to read]

Questions

Q1: Many Christian scholars have lamented the gap between their advanced expertise in a field of learning and their under-developed capacity “to think Christianly” about their scholarship. **Do you recognize or experience this gap (or asymmetry) between scholarly expertise and theological understanding?**

Leader prompts:

This gap has been described in various contexts as a failure:

- To integrate faith and learning
- To engage the university as an institution with value for the Kingdom
- To develop a Christian mind

Q2: **Why have these gaps opened up?**

Leader prompts:

Many academics state that:

- The demands of the academic life are so great there is no time to add what seems like an additional burden
- To think theologically, certainly at a more sophisticated level, is a different kind of reasoning beyond the training and education of academics in most fields
- The local church offers a spiritual home sufficient to meet the needs of a faith journey
- To see one's scholarship through the eyes of faith moves a scholar outside one's comfort zone. It is a bridge too far
- An inner pietistic faith, or an outward-facing apologetic stance, exhaust the roles a Christian scholar can be expected to play in the university

Q3: A scholar's life and academic practices take place in many settings and contexts.

As you reflect on your own scholarly life at present, where is most of your effort focused?

Can elements of faith be salient to these? Examples?

Leader prompts:

We can map an academic's life in two broad settings

1. Within the university or research institute

- Research (labs, libraries, archives, field work, computing)
- Teaching (classes, labs, mentoring)
- Administration (chairing committees, departments, leading centers, university administration)

2. Within academic fields

- Scholarly societies & networks
- Academic publishing
- Collaborations
- Speaking (seminars, presentations)
- Conferences

Q4: GFI seeks to bridge the gap between faith and scholarship for busy academics by:

- Identifying core topics that can be readily discussed in any university setting. These include (1) core doctrines (e.g., creation, evil, human nature, reconciliation, hope); (2) great motifs in Christian thought (e.g., beauty, flourishing, forgiveness, order, peace, wonder), and (3) virtues (e.g., love, justice, humility, practical reason)
- Initiating Faith and Scholarship Dialogues on a topic, where notable theologians write Theology Briefs and disciplinary scholars respond with Disciplinary Notes and Briefs;
- Providing original content for personal and group study

What promise do these dialogues offer in supplementing, challenging and shaping the thought and practices of Christian scholars and academic institutions more broadly?

Q5: In the shaping of GFI's mission, GFI Convening Panelist [Michael Spence](#) (then, President, University of Sydney; now, President & Provost, University College London) posed the question—**If GFI seeks to exert a Christian influence on scholarship and academic institutions, what kinds of impact should we envision?[/question_5] we envision?**

Leader prompts:

- Cultivate the inner integrity of the individual academic - bring into an integral relationship the scholarly and faith dimensions of one's person;
- Influence an academic's scholarly agenda, research, writings and teaching;
- Shift a scholarly field through agenda-setting, or new concepts, theory and research methods, whether explicitly or implicitly in the name of our faith;
- Shape how scholarship is done - through teaching, mentorship, collaboration;
- Expand the presence of faith-infused dialogue and orientations within a scholar's academic institution and academic fields

Q6: **Are you aware of scholars who have exerted such influences?**

Further Questions

- **As a Christian do you experience isolation (in your discipline and/or in your university) or mutual support and community?**
- **Which types of impact on scholarship or academic institutions might be most salient in your current context?**
- **Does the career stage of a Christian scholar—early, mid, late, emeritus—likely influence the degree or kind of impact s/he can have on her/his scholarly focus or fields or institutions?**

For more information

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