

TRANSFORM

THE MAGAZINE OF WESTERN SEMINARY | *Spring 2019*

SUPERHEROES CAN'T SAVE YOU

DR. TODD MILES



LOOKING FOR A SAVIOR

JAPANESE TRANSLATION

CENTER FOR PASTORAL FLOURISHING

Looking for a Savior



“God created us as image bearers who have a yearning for the kingdom that is to come.”

Dr. Randy Roberts has served as Western Seminary’s president for the past eleven years. He also teaches course in Christian Spirituality.

The rising fame of Marvel superhero movies that captivate audiences both young and old has both perplexed and intrigued me. It is perplexing because the repetition of essentially the same storyline does not diminish viewer interest, regardless of the number of movies produced. It is intriguing, because I think it speaks to the innate desire created within us as humans to long for something (or someone?) to save us from ourselves. The reason we chose to highlight Dr. Miles’ book in this magazine is because this storyline of good triumphing over evil reminds me of the gospel-centered transformation that we see at work every day in the lives of our students.

But the power of the gospel must enter the story. God created us as image bearers who have a yearning for the kingdom that is still to come. While waiting for this glorious consummation, we each want to do our part to contribute to the greater story still unfolding.

It is for this very reason that the stories in this issue are filled with inspiration and a longing for gospel-centered transformation. It is why both Christians and non-Christians alike have been drawn to stories throughout the Bible of valiant men and women who, by God’s grace, overcame

tragedy and experienced radical life change, inexplicable miracles, and love so fierce it forever softened hardened hearts. In this same manner, reading stories such as those presented in this magazine of godly men and women who are writing books to debunk heretical teaching, translating meaningful leadership principles to benefit communities around the world, pursuing seminary education to help others, and being reminded that the loss of life can bring with it hope for the future, provides hope anchored in truth. They are especially, and distinctively, powerful stories because each one points to Christ as the hero.

At Western Seminary, we believe in gospel-centered transformation that alone has the power to spread the hope of life everlasting with the true King. The hope we have for a life with Jesus is what provides strength to endure. When we are weak, He is strong (2 Corinthians 12:10). I pray these stories and news updates remind you of the exciting life we get to live when we allow Christ to remain the hero in our story.

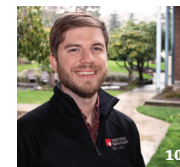
Randy Roberts



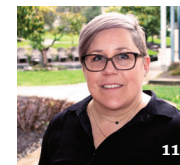
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| READER FEEDBACK |

We care about what you think. If interested in sharing what thoughts, ideas, comments, or questions came to mind when reading this issue of the magazine, please reach out to us!

Opinions should be a maximum of 250 words and include full name, city and state, and class year (if applicable). They may be featured in future magazine issues.

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TRANSFORM Magazine

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Western Seminary serves as a catalyst and resource for spiritual transformation by providing, with and for the church, advanced training for strategic ministry roles. Western Seminary is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).

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At Western Seminary, we love the Church. That is why we are committed to training Christians who are well-equipped to support its mission of bringing gospel-centered transformation to the world.

No other message can match the gospel's ability to change human lives in breadth, depth, and duration.

"Western Word" provides some illustrations of how the Seminary is redemptively impacting others outside of the classroom through creative gospel-focused initiatives.



Become better equipped for service and/or ministry leadership within your church, nonprofit, or personal life. Take gospel-centered individual and group courses for just \$5 per course hour.

Lilly Endowment Provides Grant for Western Seminary to Establish a Center for Pastoral Flourishing

Western Seminary has received a grant of \$966,224 from the Lilly Endowment to help establish a Center for Pastoral Flourishing (CPF) serving both the Pacific Northwest and Northern California. This grant is part of Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Thriving in Ministry initiative supporting a variety of religious organizations across the nation. The initiative seeks to create or strengthen programs that help pastors build relationships with experienced clergy who can serve as mentors and guide them through key leadership challenges in congregational ministry.

The Center's initiatives will serve pastors at key stages of their vocational service. This includes new pastors early in their service, emerging leaders stepping into larger leadership roles, mid-career pastors encountering transitions in settings or roles, and seasoned pastors looking to contribute to the emerging next generation.

"Peer-learning groups are one of the strongest models I've seen to nurture trusted, accountable, and transparent relationships among pastors, both at a personal and ministerial level," said Kevin Palau, president and CEO of the Luis Palau Association. The Center will build on the ongoing relationships among Portland area pastors that the Luis Palau Association has so effectively nurtured over the past ten years, providing new ways for them to support each other and mobilize together for making an impact on the Northwest. The Center will also collaborate with more

than a dozen pre-existing formal and informal pastoral networks led by godly leaders who are looking for ways to build a sustainable movement of pastoral leaders both in the Northwest and in Northern California, where the Seminary has two extension campuses. "We see Western Seminary as a key leader in this work," said Palau. "I believe the Center for Pastoral Flourishing will help nurture and accelerate pastors in ministry throughout their careers and I confidently support this."



Bill Clem recently joined Western Seminary as the new director of the CPF. Bill has spent over forty years in various ministry contexts leading college ministries, planting churches, teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels and leading professional development seminars. Most recently, he served as the associate pastor of Imago Dei Community Church (Portland, OR) for almost six years. "He is a highly respected member of the pastoral community in Portland" said Chuck Conniry, vice president of Academic Affairs. "He is the ideal person to advance the mission of the Center." We are also very grateful that Mike Rohmberger, president and CEO of Mount Hermon Christian Conference Center, has agreed to be the program's part-time Northern California liaison. Mike has also graciously made the beautiful Mount Hermon facility available for some program retreats and related events. We appreciate your continued prayers for Bill, Mike and the CPF.



REGENERATION PROJECT

In recent years, there have been many studies done providing statistics of younger generations leaving both the church and their faith in general. ReGeneration Project was created as another gospel-centered ministry of Western Seminary to address this growing need.

Check out the newly launched ReGeneration Podcast where Jay Kim and Western alumnus, Isaac Serrano, host candid conversations about theology, church, and mission with guests like Tim Mackie, John Mark Comer, Os Guinness, Mary Jo Sharp, and J.P. Moreland. Learn more by visiting: regenerationproject.org.



GREAT COMMISSION ALASKA

Dr. E.D. Burns, Director and Faculty mentor for Western's Master of Arts in Global Leadership program, also serves as President of Great Commission Alaska. Their mission is to, "...reach Alaska Natives and make disciples by training Christ-centered leaders in Bush Alaska through biblical/ministry training and aviation services." The ministry was recently approached by Alaska's Department of Corrections to use their Alaska Native discipleship training center at a remote fishing lodge to disciple Natives who have become Christians in prison. This two-year post-prison program for discipleship and skills training works with Natives to ultimately send them back to their villages. To read more about the work Great Commission Alaska is doing, visit their website at www.akmission.org.



JAPANESE TRANSLATION

A Graduate Story

As of 2017, only 1.5% of the population in Japan professed Christianity. This trailed dramatically behind Buddhism at 66.8% and Shinto at 79.2%, as the majority of Japanese practice both religions (Statista, 2017). This creates a growing need to produce reliable theological content for use by the Japanese-speaking Church both in Japan and around the world.

Several years ago, Shigeru Suzuki (M.Div., 1990, Th.M., 1992) and his wife, Atsuko (M.C.M., 1987), visited Portland, Oregon, to spend time with Western Seminary's President, Randy Roberts. The Suzukis shared about their growing ministry in Japan, and during that conversation Randy mentioned a well-known book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, written by Pete Scazzero.

Pete Scazzero is the founder of New Life Fellowship Church in Queens, New York City, a large multiracial church with more than seventy-three countries represented (*Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 2019). Following *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, Scazzero wrote *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* and *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* sharing from his own leadership experiences that it is impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.

Scazzero wrote deeply convicting statements such as, "Whenever we find ourselves wanting the ministry impact of Jesus while simultaneously resisting spending time with Jesus, we are positioning ourselves for a beating". And, "Minimally transformed leaders will always result in minimally transformed teams doing minimally transformed ministry".

"What is typically hidden, avoided and treated as shame, has now been dealt with and spoken of rather freely in our Bible studies and fellowship."

It is no secret how hard it is for Christians in America to remain set apart from the individualized, consumeristic culture in which we live and breathe. Scazzero's take on learning to embrace sabbath rest and incorporate daily rhythms of communing with God is refreshing. While our world is often riddled with messages of needing to produce more, do more, and spend more, there is an inner heartbeat within believers for the longing to rest as we remember Jesus Christ is the one who provides and sustains - not of our own accord, but by His steadfast mercy. It is only then, after learning to embrace emotional health

as a key component of spiritual health, that we will see our leadership, churches and relationships transformed by the power of the gospel.

The Suzukis were captivated by the themes presented within *The Emotionally Healthy Church* and wanted to make its content accessible to non-native English speakers within their country.

They connected with a Japanese Christian publisher and developed a partnership to begin the translation process. By the year 2009, the book was officially translated and printed for native Japanese speakers who had expressed a similar desire to grow their Kingdom impact and overall leadership within their churches and ministries.

A few years later, in 2014, the Suzukis shared their third sabbatical together. This season of rest presented them with an unexpected opportunity to visit the church Scazzero attends; it was here that the three of them were able to meet. After a short time of swapping stories, Scazzero invited the Suzukis to his home to fellowship with him, his wife, and other leaders. Shigeru notes the faithfulness of God in initially connecting him earlier with Randy Roberts. All it took was a conversation with a friend, who then offered Shigeru a meaningful book, to change the



Shigeru and Atsuko Suzuki

course of his career and calling. Years later, that friendship paved the way for Shigeru to begin a relationship with an author who profoundly impacted his life.

Now, nearly nine years after that first conversation, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* has also been translated, printed and distributed. Shigeru writes, "We praise God for the deeper, thorough transformation our church in Japan has been experiencing for the past two decades. What is typically hidden, avoided and treated as shame, has now been dealt with and spoken of rather freely in our Bible studies and fellowship. It is such a joy to see our church body being constantly changed from glory to glory."

In addition to translating these encouraging books for Japanese-speaking men and women to benefit from, Shigeru is a high impact leader serving

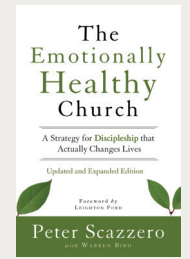
multiple communities. In his hometown of Sendai, located 300 miles north of Tokyo, where he and Atsuko have been residing since 1992, he teaches spiritual formation and theology courses at Sendai Baptist Seminary. This seminary is the same place Atsuko graduated from prior to furthering her education at Western Seminary. Shigeru shares, "My classes are designed to equip pastors and laypeople for the enrichment of local churches. I have been further encouraged to study and grow by those who so faithfully come to study from different parts of northern Japan. Some even drive nearly four

hours back and forth just to listen and study God's Word. Without such faithful and God-loving people, I would not be where I am now."

Additionally, Shigeru serves at a local Baptist church, where both he and Atsuko have been members for nearly 25 years. Beyond all this, Shigeru has had the joy of broadcasting weekly messages through the

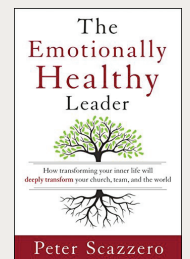
Bible Broadcasting Network (BBN) to native Japanese speakers. Shigeru writes, "I am encouraged by quite a few Japanese listeners living throughout the world. I receive responses from different parts of Japan and the world; even those who have lived abroad for a long time still desire to listen to God's word in their mother tongue instead of in their second language. That's understandable." Alongside Shigeru, Atsuko has had the privilege of teaching classes on church music and worship while leading worship seminars for local church assemblies.

Shigeru thanks Randy Roberts and Western Seminary for the ongoing impact they have had on his life since graduating. After reflecting on all that has progressed since his time of study, he shares a beautiful sentiment: "God has been good despite me."



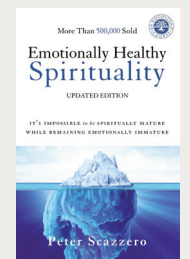
THE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY CHURCH

"This new edition shares powerful insights on how contemplative spirituality can help you and your church slow down - an integral key to spiritual and emotional health."



THE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY LEADER

"Shows leaders how to develop a deep, inner life with Christ, examining its profound implications for surviving stress, planning and decision making, building teams, creating healthy culture, influencing others, and much more."



EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

"Scazzero found two truths to be true: you can't be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature, and unless you slow and quiet your life down for a first-hand relationship with Jesus Christ, little change is possible."

Blurbs taken from Amazon Descriptions.

▶ ONLINE

We have continued to experience record-breaking growth in Western Seminary's Online Campus (OLC). To give some perspective, in the '11-'12 academic year, we had a total of 24 OLC students. We have seen steady increases each consecutive year since then. Last year's OLC student headcount ('17-'18) was 228. In other words, our OLC student population increased nine times in six short years!

Even more exciting, the total OLC credit hours per academic year has increased eighteen times (double that of the headcount) in the same period of time, increasing from 135 hours in the '11-'12 academic year, to 2,437 hours in the '17-'18 academic year. As of the middle of the current academic year ('18-'19), fall and spring enrollment and credit-hour numbers have outpaced those of last year. When the final numbers come in for summer, we anticipate breaking last year's record.

"Sustained increases like this are both a testament to the expertise and hard work of our OLC leadership and faculty, and a catalyst by which the Seminary expands its mission of gospel-centered transformation to the Church and world" says Chuck Conniry, vice president of Academic Affairs.

PORTLAND

After many years of discussion, Western Seminary's board unanimously approved an administrative recommendation that the Portland campus remain at its current location and progressively renovate those buildings. The beautiful Portland location will thus remain on the slope of Mt. Tabor, in the lively and artistic Hawthorne District. "That decision seems to resonate the most with the clear majority of our constituency, and thankfully their reasoning was much more

grounded in mission considerations than in mere sentimental feelings" explained President Roberts. So far efforts to improve the functionality of the campus have included the installation of air conditioning and new carpeting inside key buildings with fresh landscaping outside. Upcoming projects include installing a wheelchair lift in Bueermann Hall, improving overall security of the campus, and applying a fresh coat of paint in addition to other enhancements.

SACRAMENTO

We are excited to have our two Christian Spirituality classes hosted at Camp Alta this year! Students said of their experience, "I love having the intensive at Camp Alta. It provided a great context to discuss the content in the class, and I felt like I was really able to get to know my classmates." Others spoke more directly to their fellowship with God: "It was refreshing for me personally and in my walk with God."

In the counseling program, we are excited that the Addiction Studies Certificate is now California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals (CCAAP) certified. Furthermore, we continue to prepare students and alumni who seek to be dual-licensed in both Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and Marriage & Family Therapist (MFT).

SAN JOSE

Have you seen the New Student Center? Thanks to donations of furniture, valued at nearly \$20,000, we have set up a great place for students to study and socialize! Congratulations to the graduates from Western who took the licensure exam in 2018 at an outstanding 90% pass rate!

The Counseling program is gearing up for yet another improvement as we continue to keep in line with the Board of Behavior

Sciences (BBS) for both LPC and MFT licenses. Congratulations to the graduates from Western who took the licensure exam in 2018 at an outstanding 90% pass rate!

For both California campuses... Did you know that you can reserve a room for your staff or church to use? Give us a call as we would love to share the gifts and resources God has blessed us with!

SEATTLE

In a high-tech region that boasts the birthplaces of major businesses like Microsoft, Amazon, Boeing and Starbucks, the Seattle Teaching Site continues to establish a footprint for solid biblical and theological education in order to train Christian leaders for a variety of callings

and vocations. By offering accredited courses each semester, and forming key partnerships with local churches, our Seattle site aims to maintain a trustworthy and accessible center for ministry training in this strategic city.



"The memory of the righteous will be a blessing."

- Proverbs 10:7

Honoring Dr. Robert W. Bruechert Sr.

A Personal Remembrance from Bonnie Bruechert

Recently, Western Seminary dedicated the board room in Bueermann Hall in memory of former trustee, Dr. Robert W. Bruechert Sr. There was not a dry eye in the room as Bruechert's wife, Bonnie, shared this remembrance of her husband and the impact Western Seminary has had on their lives:

"Proverbs 10:7 says, 'The memory of the righteous will be a blessing.' Our memory of Robert W. Bruechert as a loving husband, father, and grandfather is a blessing we will treasure in our hearts forever. Our family has been desirous of establishing a memorial in a significant location that will be an extension of Bob's legacy, a reminder of what Bob felt is our purpose as Christians on this earth, to share the message of the gospel of Christ. We are honored and we thank Western Seminary for dedicating this room to his memory where he served on the Board of Trustees.

The Oregon City Eye Clinic would have been an appropriate place for him to be memorialized because he was a skilled and dedicated physician. The New Life Church in West Linn, Oregon, where he worshipped and served faithfully was another place worthy of consideration. But our prayerful choice for Bob's memorial was Western Seminary, because we know his passion was to have the gospel effectively presented to the whole world and he felt Western's ministry

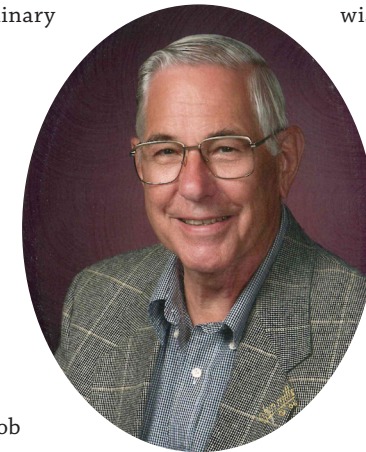
encompassed that very goal. The training of students for the work of the ministry is done here by a faithful faculty supported by a dedicated Board of Trustees and led by a

president whom we hold in high esteem for his godly wisdom and integrity. Bob and I have enjoyed a close relationship with the seminary for many years and have observed well-trained graduates in the pulpit and on the mission field. We have been convinced it was a place worthy of our prayers and support.

When Bob was asked to serve on the Board of Trustees of Western Seminary, he took seriously the responsibilities of serving faithfully, considering it a privilege. As we place his picture and display his photographs on these walls, our prayer is that

God may be glorified as he continues to bless the ministry of Western Seminary and that every remembrance of our loved one, Robert W. Bruechert, will bless this sacred place. The memory of the righteous will be a blessing."

The verse Bonnie included is a beautiful juxtaposition of the choice humans are given to either submit to the teaching of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, or submit to the ways of the world. Those who follow Christ should be remembered with great honor, and Western Seminary is pleased to honor the memory of Dr. Robert W. Bruechert's faithfulness in this manner.



Q&A

Q Why Western?

A I chose Western Seminary because it checked all the boxes - counseling accreditation, theological soundness, a rich history that now dates back over 90 years and a faculty that genuinely cares about every student. After attending Preview Day in October 2017, I was sold.

Q Favorite Class You've Taken?

A Dr. Laurie Bloomquist's class on Human Development. It was fascinating to learn about how people grow and mature biologically, psychologically, socially, morally and spiritually throughout their lifespan.

Q Favorite Hobby?

A I am tempted to say spending time outdoors, but I think I will go with creative writing. The counseling department got to witness a spoken-word and jingle performance of mine at our talent show this past fall, so the cat is officially out of the bag.

Q Most Impactful Thing You've Learned So Far?

A Last semester in my Theology I class, Dr. Gerry Breshears challenged us to wrestle with the role of God's providence in human suffering (something we counselors literally signed up for). What has stuck with me most about this challenge is the pursuit of continuing to be a worshiper of God despite the human brokenness we encounter on a regular basis.

Q Favorite Superhero and Why?

A Spiderman has my vote because he really made the most of that radioactive spider-bite, and he taught us that "with great power comes great responsibility."

| STUDENT SPOTLIGHT |

Ryan Woods



After spending six years as a financial planner, helping others accomplish goals such as preparing for retirement and sending their kids to college, I was laid off from my job and entered a season of seeking God's will for what He would have me do next. As time went by, two words came to mind: seminary and counseling. Those two words quickly led me to Western Seminary.

Whether we are training to be counselors, pastors, or lay leaders, Western Seminary prepares us to engage the culture in a way that is full of both grace and truth. From a counseling perspective, we are taught not to impose our values on our clients. Thankfully, the effort to avoid imposing my values does not require me to give up those values. Rather, I cling tightly to them, especially the truth of God's Word. I am grateful for a place where it is safe to put our Christian values out in the open and literally bare our souls without fear of judgment or ridicule. Seminary is a special time where we can immerse ourselves in God's truth more than we will likely do after we graduate and re-enter the "real world." Having a solid theological foundation and learning how to integrate it with our work is critical in ministering to a broken world that claims to be wise.

My time at Western Seminary has grown within me a desire to value perspectives that challenge my own views. I really appreciate our institution's culture of humility matched with an unshakably high view of Scripture. For example, Dr. Gerry Breshears is a big proponent of learning how to listen to understand before beginning to evaluate agreement with the viewpoint described. Simultaneously, I am realizing this strategy

does not require me to relinquish my own convictions. As a result, I have developed a higher view of God's sovereignty now than when I first began seminary.

Like other counseling students, I plan to become a licensed counselor in order to help hurting people, and I am confident I am being prepared well for this new career path. I plan to focus part of my practice on youth and adolescents, as well as married couples, and would love to spend at least one day per week working with low-income individuals. I do not plan to consume as many books as Dr. Norm Thiesen, but I certainly believe in lifelong learning in order to treat my clients in the most ethical and God-honoring way possible.

Portland has quickly become home to my wife, Laura, and me. Our move to the Pacific Northwest has been filled with encouragement and support from family, friends and our church community back in our hometown of Houston, Texas. Living far away from our families has been a sacrifice, but it has been worth it. Laura and I are grateful to the Western Seminary community along with Northwest Gospel Church for welcoming us with open arms over the past year. I would be remiss if I did not give an exclusive shout-out to Laura, who has unconditionally supported me every day of this pursuit called graduate school.

| STUDENT SPOTLIGHT |

Susan Lyle



Church has always been an integral part of my life. Growing up, my family attended every service and activity. Although I helped where needed, I never viewed my service as ministry. I hadn't seen many women lead in our church at the time, so it never occurred to me that I could be in ministry.

After marrying my college sweetheart, Dan, I came to understand that God intends all believers to use their spiritual gifts. Dan accepted a position as a worship pastor and our family moved to Laconia, New Hampshire, where I quickly became involved in children's ministry. At this church, women served in roles that were different than I had ever seen before - they prayed and read Scripture in the services, led worship and taught Bible studies. However, it was not until Dan and I wanted to host a small group in our home that I really began to see myself in ministry. With Dan's schedule and prior commitments, he did not have time to lead. Instead, he asked if I would be willing. I hesitantly agreed. To my surprise, leading did not feel like a drudgery or an obligation, but rather, it felt natural and enjoyable. Dan and others affirmed my gift to lead and shepherd, and I began to think that maybe God had more in plan for me than I had thought.

I felt a strong desire to complete a more formal training for ministry and I began working towards an M.A. in Biblical and Theological Studies. While my older brother, David, was planting a church in Cuenca, Ecuador, he completed an M.A. in Biblical Studies and came home to visit for graduation. We were blessed as a family to spend ample time together. He preached a powerful sermon at my church titled, "Only One Life to Offer". We had long talks regarding future ministry

opportunities and goals. I shared with him that although I longed to earn a Master of Divinity degree, I did not think that it made practical sense to earn a degree historically intended for men. I was surprised to hear David not only challenge my thinking, but also encourage my education and ministry goals to provide teaching rooted in trusted theology for women in the future.

The next three things guided me to Western Seminary. First, shortly after my conversation with him, David died from a heart attack at 44 years of age. I vowed that I would grow through the mourning; I would not further his loss by doubting God, but I would instead take hold of the truth presented in David's last sermon. Shortly after, the women's ministry team at my church decided to read *Shepherding a Woman's Heart* by Beverly Hislop. One evening, after crying out to the Lord and seeking what was next for me, I read Beverly Hislop's brief biographical sketch on the back of her book and took notice of her degree from Western Seminary. I applied that night.

While there are many good seminaries I could have chosen, God directed me to Western Seminary. Western Seminary has impacted my process of transformation from the lectures and textbook readings to the assignments, all of which encompass gospel-centered truth that leads to change. The professors challenge and encourage me to think more theologically which then pushes me to study more. I have come from a place of insecurity, doubt and questioning to finding security through obedience and trusting in God even when I do not have all the details. I now view myself as a woman fully devoted to serving God with the one life I have to offer.

Q&A

Q Why Western?

A I was first drawn to Western Seminary because of the variety of courses they offer to equip women in ministry. This really stood out to me as set apart from other seminaries I researched.

Q Favorite Class You've Taken?

A The theology classes are my favorite, but the most impactful class for my own spiritual transformation has been a class called Practicing Prayer and Other Spiritual Disciplines.

Q Favorite Hobby?

A I enjoy many crafty endeavors from crocheting to watercolors to creating paper flowers.

Q Most Impactful Thing You've Learned So Far?

A To love, trust, and obey God more fully.

Q Favorite Superhero and Why?

A The Black Widow. She is tough and always wears black. Also, she loves Bruce Banner; Hulk is my favorite male antihero.



SUPERHEROES CAN'T SAVE YOU

DR. TODD MILES

Dr. Miles' witty and satirical tone throughout this interview is equal parts endearing and whimsical, fitting the tone of his beloved recent book, *Superheroes Can't Save You*. Having the opportunity to ask him questions surrounding the writing process and content within provides helpful background to answer the question, is Jesus Christ simultaneously fully human and fully divine? Strap on your capes and enter a creative, imaginative state of mind as you read and learn more.

Q What sparked the idea of *Superheroes Can't Save You*?

A I had been taught the illustration of Superman to explain the Christological heresy of Docetism and then used it in my own theology and church history classes for years. (The illustration: Just as Clark Kent appeared to be human, but was really Superman in disguise, so in the heresy of Docetism, Jesus appeared to be human, but was really God in disguise.) I started expanding the repertoire to include other comic superheroes to explain more Christological and Trinitarian heresies. Students loved the illustrations, and better understood the heresies, and in turn, Christology, through their use. After developing about eight of the illustrations, I taught the material to an adult Sunday School class at my home church. The ages of those who attended ranged from teenager to octogenarian. The response was overwhelmingly positive! That is when I started thinking that a book might just work.

| BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE |

Q What is the main idea of *Superheroes Can't Save You*?

A Don't be fooled by the title. *Superheroes Can't Save You* is really a book about Jesus Christ and the gospel. The main point is this: in order for Jesus to do everything the Bible says he did and does, Jesus must be everything the Bible says he is. To modify or reduce Jesus in the least will render a being who is incapable of doing the things that we most desire and need him to do. The gospel does not work unless Jesus Christ is simultaneously fully human and fully divine.

Q What was your writing process like for this book?

A I had the outlines from the Sunday School class, and of course had all my notes and experience from teaching the Doctrine of the Person of Christ at Western Seminary. With those, it was just a matter of putting ink to paper (or fingers to keyboard). I wanted to write something accessible and non-intimidating, so the process was very easy. There was little need for further research (most of the footnotes are jokes, literally). I wrote the first chapter on the plane to a missions trip in Greece, and then finished the second chapter on the trip back. From that point on, it was just a matter of continuing to write (about one chapter per month) until I found a publisher. There was concern for a while that DC and Marvel would not be agreeable, but after conversations with their licensing people allayed those fears, it was full speed ahead.

Q How does your writing inform your personal faith?

A The writing process requires much contemplation and reflection. It is impossible to walk away from such biblically-informed meditation on the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of grace unchanged. The goal of the book was to put good Christology into the hands of people who would not ordinarily pick up a Christology book. If I could throw some church history into their path along the way, that would be a bonus. The response to the book has convinced me that there is a need for projects like these.

Q What impact have you seen so far as a result of this book?

A *Superheroes Can't Save You* has been well received by many. I found it funny that the only negatives were from people who didn't much care for the superhero illustrations as the book itself would not have been published without them. I guess every superhero must have their villain! In all honesty, the response really has been overwhelmingly positive. In addition to individual reading, I have enjoyed hearing of youth groups, college groups, and church small groups reading through the book together. For anyone else interested in doing so, there is a group study guide, written by Jared Musgrove, Groups Pastor of The Village Church, that will be available in June 2019.



Dr. Todd Miles is Professor of Theology and Director of the Master of Theology at Western Seminary. Married, with six children, Todd serves as an elder at Hinson Baptist Church in Portland, OR.

Q & A continued on next page ►

Q Who was the intended audience of this book?

A I wanted to reach anybody who had a desire to plunge into Christology for the first time; to put good teaching on the person of Christ into their hands, minds, and hearts. Those who like comic book superheroes will naturally gravitate to it (which probably requires some youth – or at least being young at heart). But most people, regardless of age, (after all, these comic superheroes have been around for a long time!) have a passing knowledge of the superheroes so the illustrations can work for all. Even those who claim to have no prior interest or knowledge in comic book superheroes have found the explanations and illustrations to work well. This really was a book intended to help explain heavy concepts regarding Jesus Christ in a fun and engaging kind of way.

Q If you had to choose, who is your favorite superhero and why? What attributes or characteristics of this superhero do you connect with most?

A I was an equal-opportunity comic book reader. I like both DC and Marvel, though my favorites have been and remain The Flash and Batman. While I loved the speed and humor of The Flash, I was captivated by Batman’s adventures and found them very relatable. The DC world is a bit darker and grittier than Marvel’s, and that really manifests itself in the Batman comics. Looking back, I was probably most drawn to Batman’s humanity, realism, and drive for justice.

Q You mention how your children were pivotal to the research and writing of this book. Is there an example you can share of something you learned from them that appeared in the final copy?

A Natalie, Ethan, and Levi, my three oldest children, all read and commented on each one of the chapters during the editing process.

They were hugely helpful in making the book as readable as it is. Ethan also hunted down all the superhero quotes that are found at the beginning of each chapter. Julius, Vicente, and Marcos, my three youngest children, helped by keeping me company during the hours of arduous scholarly research committed to watching superhero cartoons – no small feat!

Q Of all the heresies mentioned in the book, if you had to choose one that is most harmful to the church today, which would it be and why?

A The Superman heresy is the most dangerous for those who have grown up in the evangelical church. We are very good at defending the deity of Jesus, but I don’t think we know what to do with his humanity. What I endeavor to show throughout the book is how vital the humanity of Jesus is for everything that he did and does for us.

Q As someone who trains future ministry leaders, why are these two complex issues surrounding the theology of the Trinity and the person of Jesus Christ so important to understand? What is the big “So What?” takeaway you desire for your students to grasp before teaching others?

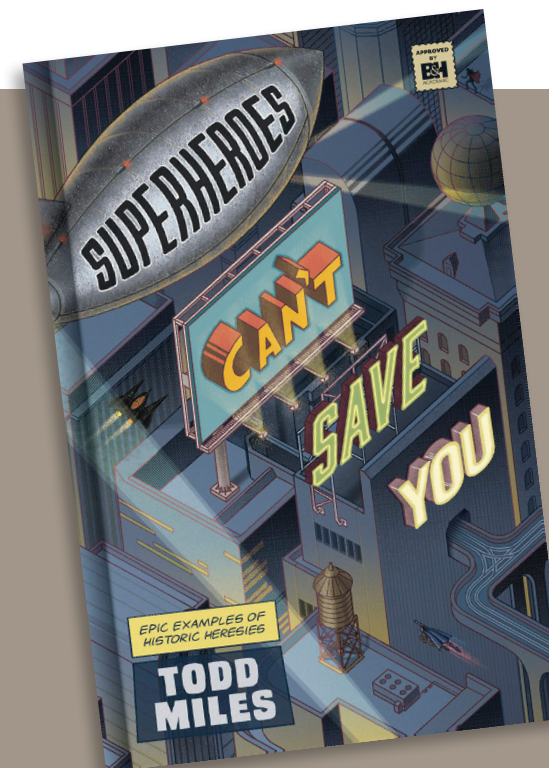
A If Jesus is not fully God (simultaneously with the Father and the Holy Spirit) and fully human, then Christian prayer will not work, the gospel will not save us, we will not have a high priest who can intercede or advocate for us, we have no model or help in temptation, the Holy Spirit cannot be sent, the cosmos will not be recreated and restored, sin and evil will not be judged and vanquished, and none of God’s redemptive purposes and promises will be consummated or kept. That’s all. Other than that, I suppose it is not that important. (He says with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, highlighting the incredibly important nature of Jesus being both fully God and fully human and what this means for us as believers.)

In a world that longs for hope and redemption, Dr. Miles emphasizes the importance of understanding Jesus Christ as our one and only Savior. He writes,

“...I have realized that there is something in the world of superheroes that transcends mere escapism. The superheroes represent humankind’s best efforts to create saviors, demigods made in our own image, beings who are able to rescue us from the horrors that accost us all as humans. The thing is, our best attempts to create such heroes fall desperately short of what we actually need...Here is the thing:

Jesus is the only one who can save us...”

– Superheroes Can’t Save You (pp. 3-4).



Title: **SUPERHEROES CAN'T SAVE YOU**

Author: **TODD MILES, PH.D.**

Publisher: **B & H ACADEMIC**

Comic superheroes embody the hopes of a world that is desperate for a Savior. But those comic creations cannot save us from our greatest foes – sin and death. Throughout the history of the Church there have been bad ideas, misconceptions, and heretical presentations of Jesus. Each one of these heresies fails to present Jesus as the Bible reveals him. In Superheroes Can’t Save You, Todd Miles demonstrates how these ancient heresies are embodied in contemporary comic superheroes.

- Blurb taken from Amazon Description



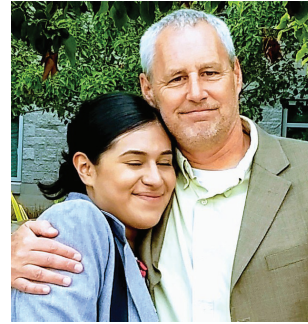
RISA HOBSON

After graduating with an MA in Counseling from Western Seminary, Risa became a Licensed Professional Counselor. She specializes in serving professional helpers, ministry workers and their families, and adult Third Culture Kids (TCK). Her own experience growing up as a TCK, as well as many years of navigating the joys and challenges of church planting and other ministries, fueled Risa's passion and desire to care for those who care for others. Risa and her family are currently missionaries with TEAM, heading overseas to provide member care full-time to pastors, missionaries, and their families.



DANIEL PAK

Aloha! Daniel is a teacher at Pacific Rim Christian University in Honolulu, Hawaii, and works as a business director for a marketing company in order to fulfill his desire of being a bi-vocational church planter and pastor. He says, "My time at Western Seminary not only confirmed my calling as a pastor, but more importantly, increased my love for the gospel and the Church." Daniel graduated from Western Seminary with his Master of Divinity and looks forward to continuing to learn and grow as a disciple and disciple maker.




MARK FISCHER

Mark felt the desire to attend seminary after a 20 year career in sales and marketing. He says, "It was the murder of an 18-year-old sex trafficking victim in Oakland, CA, that compelled me to apply to Western Seminary in the hopes of somehow ministering to these young captives in our midst." After graduating with his MA in Ministry and Leadership, Mark joined with friends to launch a Christian non-profit called Seek and Save to bring the gospel of Jesus to foster and juvenile hall youth, trafficking and domestic violence victims, and hungry and homeless kids in underserved urban communities.



KAREN HOWELLS

Karen graduated from Western Seminary with an MA in Ministry and Leadership, specializing in coaching, and uses her seminary education every day through her work in the marketplace. Karen is the owner and managing partner of The Howells Group, a company focused on helping leaders, teams and organizations flourish. Karen says, "After completing my degree, the business began to experience significant growth. At 60, when I thought I might be moving toward retirement in a few years, I am instead experiencing a whole new level of growth for the company, our team and for myself!" The foundation and spiritual confidence Western Seminary provided for Karen allowed her to remain immersed in God's word, grounded in truth, and clinging to hope while walking through an incredibly heart-wrenching season with her family while in her program. Karen closes in sharing, "Professors prayed for our family. Other adult students helped me wrestle through and process everything I was experiencing. My seminary journey has been a gift that continues to give in so many ways, in all aspects of my life."

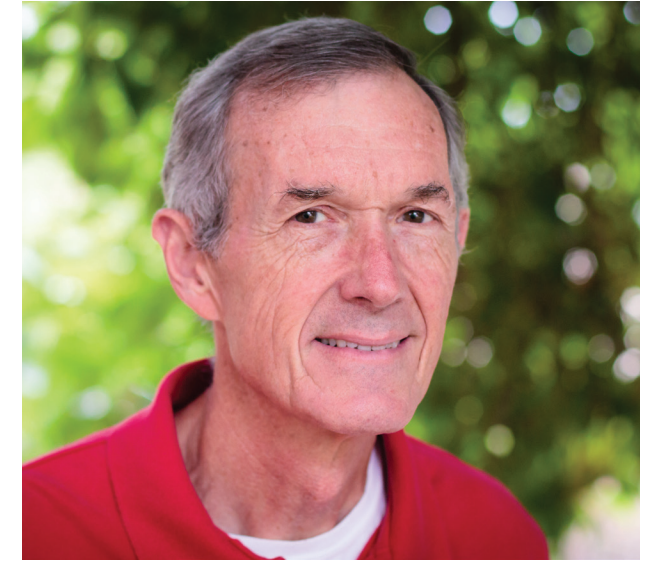
What each of these alumni have in common is a commitment to follow Jesus, a desire to study God's Word, and a willingness to proclaim the gospel in each of their places of influence. It is an honor to provide gospel-centered theological education to men and women like these. 



DR. HANNAH ACQUAYE

The Professional Counselor editorial board committee selected Western Seminary's Assistant Professor of Counseling, Dr. Hannah Acquaye, to receive the 2017 Dissertation Excellence Award for her dissertation, *The Relationship Among Posttraumatic Growth, Religious Commitment, and Optimism in Adult Liberian Former Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Traumatized by War-Related Events*. Dr. Acquaye finds her research passion through collaborating with other counselors to provide interventions to refugees, dislocated and/or relocated individuals and/or immigrant survivors who have been traumatized by war. In addition, she served resettled refugees through the Lutheran Refugee Services in Northwest Portland for many years, while also caring for mainstream clients who face challenges with mental health.

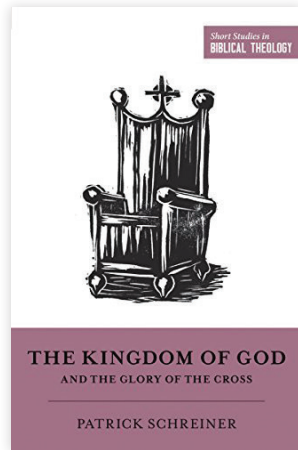
Congratulations to Dr. Hannah Acquaye
on receiving the 2017
Dissertation Excellence Award!



DR. CARL LANEY

A Western Seminary alumnus (M.Div. 1973; Th.M. 1974), Dr. J. Carl Laney has been Professor of Biblical Literature at Western Seminary since 1977. In addition to his teaching, Dr. Laney has served a dozen different churches as interim-pastor. He says that his experience in pastoral ministry has helped him emphasize the practical application of biblical truths in his teaching. Dr. Laney has authored many books and articles. His most recent books include *Essential Bible Background*, *Biblical Wisdom: Your Key to Successful Living*, and *Discipleship: Instructions from the Master Disciple Maker*. In addition to raising four amazing children, Dr. Laney's wife, Nancy, has had a significant ministry with the seminary women and in hosting students in their home. Dr. Laney completed his forty-year teaching career at Western Seminary in July 2018, and is actively engaged in writing a new book, *A Short History of Israel*, as well as enjoying teaching and preaching opportunities. Since 1992, Dr. Laney has also been taking Western Seminary students and faculty to Israel to study God's Word in the land of the Bible. Laney's study and travel in the Holy Land has enabled him to develop his specialty in Bible backgrounds, including biblical history, geography, culture and archaeology. Teaming up with Dr. Jan Verbruggen, Dr. Laney will be taking another group of Western Seminary students to study in Israel during May 2020. We are grateful for the fruitful legacy and continued impact Dr. Laney has had here at Western Seminary.

from Faculty and Alumni

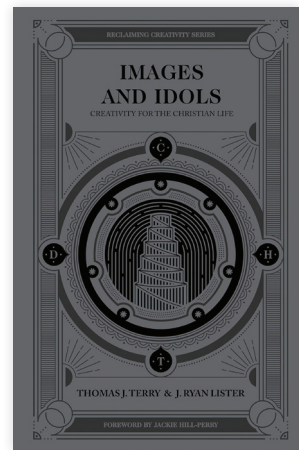


THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE GLORY OF THE CROSS
(Short stories in biblical theology)

Author:
Patrick Schreiner, Ph.D.

Publisher:
Crossway

“Defining kingdom as the King’s power over the King’s people in the King’s place, Patrick Shreiner investigates the key events, prophecies, and passages of Scripture that highlight the important theme of kingdom across the storyline of the Bible – helping readers see how the mission of Jesus and the coming of the kingdom fit together.”



IMAGES AND IDOLS:
Creativity for the Christian Life

Authors:
Thomas Terry and
Ryan Lister, Ph.D.

Publisher:
Moody Publishers

“Ryan Lister, a theology professor, and Thomas Terry, a spoken word artist and founder of Humble Beast, team up to help restore the connection between creativity and theology. Images & Idols is a theological and artistic exploration of creativity in the Christian life. It will help creatives build a strong theological foundation for their art, while challenging the church to embrace a theology of beauty and creativity.”



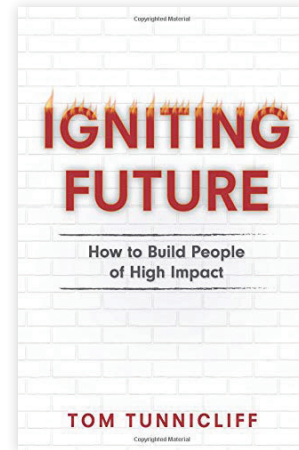
BOUNDARIES OF FREEDOM:
The Quantum Proposal of Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Author:
Lee Thai, MD (M.Div., 2001)

Publisher:
Resource Publications

“Are our pains and sufferings preordained and fixed by God, or are they the consequences of man’s actions? Can the immutable Lord ever change his mind in response to our prayers? ...This groundbreaking work is a must-read for all Christians who struggle with the dilemma of divine sovereignty and human’s responsibility.”

Note: All proceeds from Lee’s book benefit Western Seminary



IGNITING FUTURE:
How to Build People of High Impact

Author:
Tom Tunnicliff, Ed.D (M.Div., 1997)

Publisher:
Kindle Direct

“Igniting Future is about how people who make a difference in the world actually get that way...and the crucial roles youth ministry leaders, parents, teachers, coaches, and mentors play in this work... Author Tom Tunnicliff believes his new Layers of Confidence framework will give parents, teachers, coaches, and mentors the guidance needed to inspire the next generation to change the course of history one person at a time.”

Blurbs taken from Amazon Descriptions.

Watch for new faculty and alumni publication pages with links and descriptions available on our website coming soon!



Israel Study Tour
MAY 17 – JUNE 7, 2020

In conjunction with the Jerusalem University College, this three-week course explores the geographical and historical settings of the Bible through guided field trips and class lectures throughout the land of Israel.

Interested in learning more? Visit our website at westernseminary.edu/academics/study-tours.



Time to Celebrate!

WESTERN SEMINARY 2019 COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY DATES

Each year, Western Seminary graduates come together to attend an evening dinner banquet the Friday evening before their Saturday morning commencement ceremony. Be sure to congratulate the graduates in your life!

Portland Ceremony: April 27, 2019 (includes Seattle & Online)
Sacramento Ceremony: May 18, 2019
San Jose Ceremony: July 13, 2019

Have You Met Yet?



DR. CHARLES CONNIRY:
VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Serving on the Portland campus since Summer 2018, Dr. Charles Conniry comes to Western Seminary with a wealth of experience in both Christian higher education and pastoral ministry. He’s invested 25 years in a variety of instructional and administrative roles, including student mentoring, directing programs, and leading faculty teams as Academic Vice President and Dean. All this service is informed by his 15 years of pastoral ministry and church planting. He is an embodiment of Western Seminary’s commitment for students to learn from professors who double as ministry practitioners.

Dr. Conniry’s own commitment to the Lord and his Great Commission purposes are just as crucial as his background. He explains, “I am excited to serve at Western Seminary because it has remained faithful to its theological commitments and its focus on equipping men and women for kingdom work for over 90 years. For me, coming to Western Seminary is coming home.” We are overjoyed to welcome Dr. Conniry.



ROBERT JONES:
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF ADVANCEMENT

Robert arrived on staff in February 2018. He has been serving in theological education for over 28 years and brings a wealth of Advancement experience from several theological schools. Robert chose to commit his life to theological education because of his conviction that, “as the seminary goes, so goes the local church.” Western Seminary’s distinctive focus on gospel-centered transformation and service to the local church were an important part of his decision to join Western Seminary.

Robert is excited to help strengthen and grow Western Seminary’s student enrollment and network of friends and supporters. He states, “Western Seminary has played a vital role in preparing men and women to serve the Church for over nine decades. I am pleased and honored to be part of this legacy.” It is with great enthusiasm that we welcome Robert Jones to our family.



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