Orthodoxy & Orthopraxis

Carrie Hayashida

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Dr. David Ward

1. Write a 5-page paper using the Examination of Christian Practice essay outline [Course Resources].

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

Carrie , good work on your Examination of Christian Practice essay for PHI 943-32!

Note brief feedback below by section:

**Event Selected for Reflection:** I love your calling to equip high school students with the discovery of their vocational calling and to help ground them in biblical work principles before college!

**Situational Dimensions:** 1) Setting- Four years in high school for students is the same length of time as getting an undergraduate degree. But it is an even more formative stage of life. 2) Role/s: (functions or skills used or needed)- Your OGS degree will improve your professional status as a career counselor, especially if your final doctoral research project focuses on a dimension of the career guidance issue. 3) Design: (Capabilities/limitations, strengths/weaknesses, spirituality) You demonstrated 360-degree honest self-awareness in this section! 4) View of God, Biblical Truths, Principles: Good use of a key text in biblical theology about calling (Matthew 28:19)! The Great Commission creates the calling to discipleship and to make disciples.

**Operational Beliefs:** From what you have said so far, this is how I would distill your Operational Belief: Few people understand that how God has wired them can guide them into a sense of vocational calling. The consequences of your operational belief have caused you to focus your calling to see the “Christian context of faith at work, teaching vocational calling, and teaching Christians to see their career as their mission field through planting the STRIVE ministry to serve the Kingdom.”

**Christian Critical Thinking:** You develop the contributions of the sources for Christian critical thinking (Scripture, tradition, culture/reason, and experience) well except that you do not cite any scholarly sources by Christian writers. The Christian Tradition section is a great place to cite scholarly Christian sources. The Culture (and Reason) section is also a great place to cite scholarly sources.

**Theological Significance:** This is a PhD doctoral dissertation level research hypothesis. Awesome! Your premise [hypothesis] is “that students who know their calling prior to going to college will be less likely to lose their faith. “

**Contextual Application:**  You have a tremendous application. I know how hard it is to get into churches because many pastors are very protective. It seems like the Youth Pastors are the ones you would need to work with.

**1. Event Selected for Reflection**

1.1. The Struggle (problem-solving). Since 2015, I have been a Christian Career Coach trying to gain access to churches in Southern California to equip high school students with the discovery of their vocational calling and to help ground them in biblical work principles before they leave for college.

1.2. I chose this experience because students are losing their faith at an unbelievable rate according to a Barna Group study. It is my belief that a correlation exists between lack of understanding of one’s vocational calling and not being taught effective discipleship skills. As Dr. Ward’s Theology and Orthodoxy paper suggests “all Christians are to be “in full time ministry” through whatever they do- profession included” (2020, p. 186) but because they are not they are more prone to lose their faith during college years. Essentially, we are sending Christian students without the protection of the armour of God.

1.3. Initially, I was surprised by the Barna Group’s results of lost faith and as I read through the study calculating the loss of faith over the course of the study being 10% per year my concern grew exponentially.

1.4. Since vocational calling is my professional area of expertise I was drawn to this study and to pray for God’s guidance. Ultimately, this led to understanding that my call is to use my ministry to address this issue.

**2.** **Situational Dimensions**

2.1. Setting: High school and secular college campuses where students spend four years figuring out what college major and career to choose.

2.2. Role/s: (functions or skills used or needed) - My role as a Christian Career Counselor is key to helping students understand their vocational calling. I am looking for a spiritual assessment to use along with the vocational one. Together, I will be able to help students discover their calling and be able to then equip students to disciple others.

2.3. Design: (Capabilities used/limitations surfaced; or those of others)

2.3.1. Capabilities (God-given abilities) - God has equipped me with the desire to help students that do not know their Godly design. He’s called me to care for these students and to develop a career ministry to share with churches to address this challenge.

2.3.2. Limitations (temperament) - I am one person who needs an army to help the thousands of students graduating from high school every year. That is the reason that I developed a ministry to “plant” in churches recruiting congregants as liaisons to manage and implement the program.

2.3.3. Strengths (virtues) - I have been helping students since 2015 and believe my call is to implement this ministry. In addition, program development is my niche and having taken PHI 923 I realized that I need to provide a new contextualization to present to churches.

2.3.4 Weaknesses (vices) - Getting started and staying the course is my weakness. I know what I need to do, but contacting the churches will cause me some anxiety because I have been trying to gain access since 2015, but have not been successful.

2.4. God/spirituality: God is in this. He brought me to OGS to see my calling and to understand that churches need a new Christian contextualization to go with my program and raw data from their student surveys.

2.5. View of God, Biblical Truths, Principles: The Biblical truth is we are to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19)! Somehow teaching biblical principles for vocational calling got lost. Was it ever a part of Sunday sermons? Did the church ever make that connection between calling and discipleship for adults? Thinking that it was a rare occurrence makes it understandable that it never made its way to church youth programs. Thinking this way explains how Barna’s study was able to identify the loss of faith in our Christian college students.

3. **Operational Beliefs**

The sentence I would ask is… “Do you know how God wired you to serve others for the Kingdom?

3.1. How would you distill your operational belief in the event? Ever since God led me to this line of work in 2015, I have believed everyone has a vocational calling, but few have discovered how God has wired them. Encouraging individuals to work with me just comes naturally. I offer it, but it is up to them to believe me. Obviously, I hope to develop a 2 minute commercial pitch for the new contextualization in order to better persuade churches to “plant” the STRIVE ministry in order to help everyone find their calling wherever they are at right now.

3.2. The roots of my operational belief is the Bible and Larry Burkett, who created the Career Direct ministry for Crown Financial. The work I have been doing through my organization Vision Resourcing Group is what further developed this understanding. OGS and PHI 923 brought the belief full circle with the teaching of contextualization.

3.3. The consequences of this belief is a deeper commitment to my profession and to getting the package (Christian context of faith at work, teaching vocational calling, and planting the STRIVE ministry to serve the Kingdom by teaching Christians to see their career as their mission field). My relationship with God is deeper and more meaningful because Christ is at the center of all aspects of my life. These writing assignments have helped me to become more bold for Christ as well, especially with regards to my profession and ministry. I am in the process of recruiting an individual to the ministry. As I began to doubt his ability or willingness to work with us I felt God say “trust me” and that is what I intend to do. I will do my best to present the opportunity, but will trust God to close the deal.

4. **Christian Critical Thinking**

4.1. The scriptures that speak to me are:

Jeremiah 29:11 - God’s plan for our life

Matthew 28:19 - Make disciples of all nations

Colossians 3:23 - “Whatever you do, do it from the heart for the Lord and not for people.

 4.2. The Christian Tradition to me that most closely fits with my ministry is mission work. God has called us to missions, but the “mission” in mission seems to be focused on helping the poor or solving some other societal issue. Sadly, most churches fail to see that they too have a problem before them that is failing their youth by not teaching them the biblical principles of work and giving them the armor of God to protect themselves on the secular college campus. While many students will attend and graduate from college without losing their faith, would the congregation be willing to gamble with the unknown IF they knew their child would face this issue?

4.3. Culture of the church is to preach a sermon on Sunday and expect the congregation to return the following Sunday for more. The church doesn’t see the problem of lost faith on college campuses and they believe their kids will be fine when they go to college because they trust them to do the right thing. No parent says, see you in four years and I hope your faith is still intact. Would they think differently if this information was shared with them and they knew their child was at risk of losing their faith by the time they graduate college?

 4.4. God is absolutely at work in my ministry and life. In 2023, I wondered what my next career move was. By year end I was accepting a CEO position of a small non-profit ministry and networking with Christians that would open doors for the ministry. I also was accepted to OGS to earn a doctoral degree in social leadership and have since realized that I want to be a social researcher studying deconversion and vocational calling. In 2024, I was appointed to the Cypress School Board and have just been elected to retain that seat for a four year term. Now, I just need to write out the vision and plan then pray for God to guide and sustain me.

5. **Theological Significance**

5.1. Studying the loss of faith in students through the planting of the STRIVE ministry and new Christian context shared with churches will yield results that will either corroborate or contradict my premise that students who know their calling prior to going to college will be less likely to lose their faith. Positive results will build momentum amongst church youth groups and families whose children are more confident as they head off to college.

5.2. The key source will be my study and the growth of STRIVE based on proven results.

5.3. The authority of Scripture has shown itself in any practical ways through the growth of the faith at work movement among large companies. The limitation is that a connection has not been made to godly design. Faith at work is one component of the ministry. While people need to know how to “do” faith at work, which is something that can be learned, the missing component is teaching people their godly vocational calling before they leave for college. The last missing component is churches teaching biblical principles of work and that we are all called to serve the Kingdom.

6. **Contextual Application**

6.1. My call is to package this experience and context and share it with church leaders. God willing, the leaders will see that they need a new context about vocational calling in order to protect their youth from losing their faith while at college.

6.2. God needed to open the doors for me. First, VRG’s leadership invited me to be their successor. Then for one of the Board Members suggested that I research OGS’s DSL program. God put a call on my heart that brought all the pieces together to this point!

6.3. What values drive/drove your mission in the situation? Seeing the number of Christian students that are lost when it comes to the call God has for their life and hearing stories of stress is convicting. Also, knowing that I have a solution has been like having a gift no one wants to open. Seeing the need for a new context has been very encouraging. This new hope is like putting a bigger bow on the gift.

6.4. My goals are to package the new Christian context for vocational calling with STRIVE, and an opportunity to donate to one student from a church and pray that they see the opportunity for their church.

6.5. Since the STRIVE program has had difficulty launching in churches. Pastor’s say they see the value in the program, but they make excuses as to why they won’t let us present to their congregation. It has been an interesting journey, which I hope will change is we can present a new context to the church (i.e., lost faith in college) and the solution, STRIVE.

6.6. Comments on what happened: TBD

WORKS CITED

By David C. Ward, rights reserved 2020. The model of developmental stages on which this assessment is adapted from J. Mark Bertrand, (2007). *Rethinking Worldviews: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 186-187.