

Staff Publications

11-22-2019

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DAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

BY MICHELE (CUMMINGS) SOLOMON '91

You see it every day in virtually every area of campus: faculty and staff members engaging in discipleship relationships with students. In some cases, it's a set time, with a set student, with a set study. For others, it's a surprise visit from a student needing encouragement or Sunday dinner with the family. Whatever form it takes, it's pointing students to Jesus, and encouraging them in their pursuit of Him. On the following pages are just a few stories of how Cedarville's faculty and staff are making a daily difference in the lives of students.

SUZANNE LEFEVER

HEART, ATTITUDE, ACTIONS

For Suzanne Lefever, Assistant Dean and Associate Professor of Nursing, building into her students' lives comes naturally. "I don't do anything big," she said. "I just make an attempt to connect to them in little ways." Some students she meets with regularly, while others stop in to talk as they need her. "My students know they can come to me at any time," she explained. "I am here for the students, to love on them, and I pray that through our interactions, they see a bit of the love of Jesus. I want to point them to Jesus through my heart, attitude, and actions." For Hannah First '20, Lefever has made a profound difference in her time as a nursing student at Cedarville. "She has been one of the biggest blessings in my time at Cedarville," First said. Lefever has provided First with rides to the airport, overnight lodging during breaks, and a shoulder to cry on when needed, but her greatest gift has been pointing First to Jesus. "She has reminded me over and over that my identity is in Christ and that my purpose as a nurse is glorifying Him," First shared. "I am forever thankful that the Lord is loving in how He blesses us with others."

THE GRANDFATHER HE NEVER HAD

Sometimes, the best relationships just happen. Bob Parr, Senior Professor of Sociology, was guest lecturing in a criminal justice class, speaking on family relationships, when Marquise Jones '22 approached him after class. "I know nothing about being a father," Jones told him. And so began the unlikely friendship between a professor entering his 40th year of teaching and a college freshman, a relationship that Parr readily admits has changed him as much as it has helped Jones. The two get together often, sometimes with Jones just stopping by Parr's office to chat, or through regular events like church and Sunday lunch with Parr and his wife, Kathy '94, or family game nights. The Parrs have welcomed Jones into their home, and their hearts. "We just share life," Parr said. Jones considers Parr like a grandfather he never really had. "I always wanted a relationship with an older man, especially a believer," Jones shared, "but I didn't know how to get one. I have that now." For Jones, Parr is teaching him what it means to be a godly husband and father. "I grew up in a culture of fatherlessness," Jones explained. "I want to be

a good husband and father someday." As the two spend time together, Jones is learning as much from Parr's godly example as he is from his wise words. "When I graduate, we'll have four years of memories," Jones said. "He's made a big impact on my life."

CU MOM

If Lynn Roper, Assistant Professor of Special Education, is falling behind in her work, it's probably because she's been spending time with a student. "I will never turn away a student," she explained, "even if I'm busy. My heart's desire is to pour into my students." She and her husband don't have children, but she considers her students her kids. "I always thought I'd have kids," she said. "God met that desire in a different way." Some of her students even call her their "CU Mom." She spends countless hours with students getting to know them on a personal level, so eventually they are comfortable coming to her with deeper, spiritual issues. One of those students, Amanda Davis '20, assumed her interaction with her advisor would be strictly academic when she came to Cedarville as a transfer student. Instead, she encountered a professor — Roper — who deeply cared for her as a person, and especially her walk with Jesus. The two meet regularly to discuss Davis' academic progress, but "also to keep me accountable to some things I wanted to work on in my

I will never turn away a student, even if I'm busy. My heart's desire is to pour into my students.

personal walk with Christ." Davis has found Roper to be a place of refuge during personal struggles. "She has always been there for me to talk through things with, and she always words things in a way I can understand," Davis shared. "I am so blessed to have Dr. Roper in my life, not just as an academic advisor but as a life mentor and sister in Christ!"

IMMEDIATE IMPACT

For several years, Patrick Dudenhofer '04, Assistant Professor of Computer Science, felt frustrated after Getting Started Weekend that he wasn't able to stay in close touch with his freshmen advisees. "I would spend time with them that first week," he explained, "but then I wouldn't see

them again till spring.” He looked for a way to get to know his advisees, while building into their lives and making sure they got off to a good start at Cedarville. Two years ago, he started purchasing copies of *Thoughts for Young Men* by J.C. Ryle to hand out to his approximately 10 new advisees at their initial meeting the first week of freshman year. Then, he schedules informal sessions at Stinger’s, Cedarville’s casual dining option, and encourages students to meet with him to discuss the book. Not all students come, but for those who do, they discuss topics from how to live godly lives to finding and getting involved with a local church. Nathan O’Neel ’21 was part of the first year’s group of students. “At first I thought all professors did that,” O’Neel said. “Then I realized Professor Dudenhofer chose to go out of his way — waking up early even — just to spend some time getting to know students and teaching us how to mature over our four years at Cedarville. I still remember a lot of the lessons I learned from those sessions.” For Dudenhofer, it’s a way to try to make an impact immediately. “The truth is,” he explained, “we don’t know for sure how long we have these students. Every year I have students who change majors or transfer to another school. I want to make sure I’m building into their lives right away.”

MENTORSHIP AS TO THE LORD

The first day that Donna Fifer, Manager of Stinger’s, began her job at Cedarville’s snack shop, she hung Colossians 3:23–24 in her office: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” It’s the foundation for how she treats her work, and a lesson that she daily passes on to her student-workers. “I work with the students to show them to always work their hardest at whatever they do,” Fifer explained.



Many of her workers, especially international students, have not worked much before. “I want the students to see what it looks like to use your work as a service to the Lord,” she continued. In the process of daily working together, she has built into the lives of her student-workers by her example of strong faith and commitment to doing everything she does to bring glory to God. “She is an example of what it is to have joy in your work,” Sarah Benko ’21, a student-worker in Stinger’s, commented. “Even when things aren’t going well — workers don’t show up or food doesn’t get delivered on time. She’s an encourager, a cheerleader. She doesn’t just do her job well; she does it with joy.” Fifer prays for and with her students, and they talk about what God is doing in their lives. When she reaches out to encourage a student, she does so with sound scriptural wisdom. “I think they impact my life more than I impact theirs,” she said. “I just want to be as good of an example to them as I can be.”

GRACE UPON GRACE

For many years, Nathan Lane ’08, Student Supervisor for the University Bookstore, and his wife were part of a church community in Nashville, Tennessee. “We saw the Gospel of Christ take hold of people in wonderful, unsettling, and undeniable ways,” Lane recalled, “and I count myself among them.” One summer, the entire church body was led through The New City Catechism (a series of 52 doctrinal questions and answers) to openly discuss, wrestle with, and explore what the orthodox doctrine of the historical church was and what that meant for a believer and the Church. Nathan recounted this experience with Bob Sirko ’20, a student-worker at Cedarville’s bookstore, last winter, explaining how impactful it was in his life. Sirko asked Lane if they could go through the catechism together. Lane was more than happy to oblige. “God had been



so kind to me in revealing these truths, and I was excited to explore it further, this time having a one-on-one companion,” Lane explained. During spring semester, the two walked through 14 of the 52 question and answers in the catechism, meeting for lunch and using the New City Catechism app to read through the prayer, the commentary, and the Scripture associated with each question. “The semester I spent exploring with Bob the depths of God’s goodness was grace upon grace, and I praise God for it,” Lane explained. And Sirko agrees. “I am grateful that Nate would teach me more about Christ,” he said. “I have learned how important it is to have consistent time in the Bible and to know what you believe.” The two plan to continue the study this semester, and Sirko hopes to introduce his friends to the study.

PURE MOTIVATION

Only God can take our past struggles and use them for His glory. That is exactly what He’s done for Tara Winter ’17, Disability Services Manager, through the ministry she has to young women on campus. “I am in awe every day at how God has redeemed my story,” she said. Winter is in her 12th year as advisor for Sanctify Ministries, a women’s purity organization on campus made up of 20 young women who are passionate about bringing God glory through the way they live their lives. “We want to reframe what purity means,” Winter explained. “It’s not just physical, but spiritual, mental, emotional. It’s how we live our lives to be holy.” Winter’s goal for the ministry is to disciple each of its members to equip them to go on to disciple others. The group participates in a weekly study, this year walking through *The Hole in Our Holiness* by Kevin DeYoung, examining what it means to walk closely with Jesus. Abby Kebbel ’20 has been a part of Sanctify Ministries for three years and has grown immensely under Winter’s leadership. “Tara has transformed my view of purity in light of the Gospel,” Kebbel commented. “I have grown as a woman of God after listening to her deep wisdom for navigating this life. She is one of the most authentic and life-giving women I have ever met.” Winter also regularly discipled girls one-on-one, many of them struggling with issues of purity. “We talk about hard, authentic questions in a safe environment,” she shared. “I tell them they can’t tell me anything that will shock me.” She just loves them and points them to Christ, who can redeem all their struggles.



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