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## Working Towards Originality

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## Shelby Cornelius

I'm an aspiring physician one year into the molecular biology program here at Cedarville. I'm from Plain City, OH, a place mostly known for Amish style donuts if anything. I love the Lord, my family, and running.

## Working Towards Originality

*In Learning for the Love of God: A Student's Guide to Academic Faithfulness*, Donald Opitz and Derek Melleby discuss why students should give their best academic effort and how to do that in today's colleges and universities. Chapter six of the book explains how the gospel should frame the Christian's approach to a future career. Opitz and Melleby challenge Christians to work with imagination, keeping their eyes fixed on bringing glory to God through his creation. They challenge students to have aspirations set on restoring God's creation rather than on self fulfillment. This sort of dreaming requires an imagination filled with hope and faith that Christ will restore the world one day. When Christians develop this mindset, their work should confront the problems others have accepted as a part of life or categorized as unsolvable. By looking towards the coming consummation, Christians can work with the comfort that Jesus will complete their labor, not by flawed human hands, but by the One who makes all things new (65-67). Unhinging my imagination requires a great deal of faith and will lead me to face daunting issues for the glory of God. These issues won't overwhelm me because whatever little I do to help the

world through my future career, Christ will bring to perfect completion.

While I read this section of *Learning for the Love of God*, I realized how easily a bold imagination could lead me down a path pursuing grades and accolades if my imagination does not center on bringing God glory. Parents, Disney movies, and friends told me for years to pursue my dreams and follow my heart, and I listened to them. My heartfelt dreaming brought me a new desire in high school; I wanted to claim the title of valedictorian. I lived for the A, but my aches for success never subsided despite receiving 4.0 semester after semester. The spring of my senior year, my school's secretary called me to the principal's office over the intercom one Monday morning. A few hallways and staircases later, I found myself (for the first time) in the principal's office. A handful of other students filled the small space, silently waiting for the man to speak. He pulled out red peppers from his mini fridge and munched away as if it they were carrots. "I think you all know why you're here," he began in between chomps. "Congratulations 2017 best of class!" He then gave each one of us a paper. We left the office smiling and in a bit of a daze. I read my paper to discover my class rank: 1. I had done it. My dream came true just like Peter Pan told me. I had believed and I had achieved! Somehow, I felt underwhelmed. I thought I would feel ecstatic; I had imagined the biggest, craziest achievement I could get, and it had worked. After reading *Learning for the Love of God*, I now understand my dissatisfaction with receiving this award. I hungered for the title of valedictorian for my glory and not for God's, making all my work ultimately empty, or as it says in Ecclesiastes, vanity. I had set my

big aspirations lose on my own achievement rather restoring the world God loved.

I also now understand that a limitless imagination demands that I trust God more than my own capabilities. Faith calls me to dream so large that I can't do it on my own. One night last semester, I lazed on stone steps at the edge of Cedarlake with one of best friends. We let the breeze of the evening take our conversation wherever our minds wandered. Our thoughts led where most late night thoughts do, to the bold questions and honest answers discussed only when all guards come down. My friend asked if I could be anything in the world, what would I be? A doctor. My reply came so immediately that my stomach churned. I realized that my current major would never take me to that career. Over the following weeks, I slowly accepted the desires God had placed on my heart. I confessed that I limited my goals to what I thought I could achieve because I feared failure that would inevitably follow if I stepped beyond those constraints. I would never make it through the prerequisites for medical school. I would never score high enough on the MCAT. If I could miraculously make it, I would never *really* help the world because too many giants awaited me in the medical field. A simple statement from my mission trip last summer kept coming to mind: God meets me at the end of myself. A few friends and I had reached this conclusion after having a stomach bug one day while ministering in Nicaragua. We saw nearly a dozen people come to Christ in spite of our physical condition. I remembered God's strength when I could no longer do it myself, and I came to believe that he could do the same for my career. If he wanted me to serve his kingdom as

a doctor, he would supply my every need, and this empowered me to change majors from allied health to molecular biology. My struggle with trusting too much in my own abilities affects other Christians as well. Opitz and Melleby briefly mention this phenomena on page 93, and they conclude that the fear of failure keeps many Christians from even touching the tough issues of our age. The possibility of failure should have no affect Christians efforts, though, because God calls us to faithfully serve the Lord, not win awards or claim titles.

When I work free from fear, I glorify God through my labor of restoration. I more commonly see works of restoration when looking at an old car. The “car” looks like nothing more than a hunk of rust to me, but someone with the right skills, my brother, invisions the car in its prime condition and plans how to get it there. I wouldn’t touch the thing because I wouldn’t know where to begin, but my brother does not fear the daunting task. He starts with one piece and then moves on to another, each day bringing the metal heap closer and closer to its original grandeur. Eventually, he makes so much progress that even my untrained eye can see glints of its magnificence. I cannot restore the world to its former glory the way my brother can restore a car, but I can imagine God’s original creation and move it closer and closer toward that greatness until even those who don’t know the Lord witness traces his glory and goodness.

Works Cited

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