

“Teaching for Shalom in an Age of Incivility, Discouragement, Stress, and Fear”

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Overview

I. Bio

II. Teaching contexts—faculty and student contexts

III. 15 “servant teaching” practices

IV. Q&A—public and private (index cards)

I. Bio

Living at the intersection of faith and communication in a good-but-fallen world—choosing relational life or death with faith, skill, and virtue (servant communication/teaching)

II. 2 Contexts—faculty and students (from my study, experiences, and observations, especially at CCCU schools)

A. Faculty Context

1. Declining student enrollments
2. Continuing faculty/staff layoffs
3. Deepening curricular confusion (chaos?)
4. Reactive institutional reorganizations (Faculty: “Where is the leadership?”)
5. Rising administrative work loads for faculty in charge of new, often marginally beneficial programs
6. Increasing reliance on ill-prepared adjuncts and graduate students
7. Growing teaching loads
8. Increasing faculty distrust of administrators (and trustees?)—and vice-versa
9. Escalating fear of teaching amidst the wider culture wars
10. Accumulating personal-emotional hurt (and related resentment)
11. Mounting scholarly requirements without adequate faculty time and resources (and with less enjoyment)
12. Waning collegiality (love, support, collaboration, encouragement)

B. Student Context

1. Increasing fear of the future (jobs, debt, career choices, calling)
2. Escalating mental health issues
3. Spreading “cultural” ADHD
4. Declining sense of meaning/purpose in life as well as in “schooling” (they are “kids”)
5. Increasing religious doubt—private reservations
6. Growing fear of engaging others on social issues—except with those who share the same views
7. Rising skepticism about the cost-benefit ratio of private vs. public education
8. Mounting irritation with academic “busywork”
9. Snowballing dislike of textbooks—prose and price
10. Increasing sense that faculty do not like/appreciate students (or like teaching them)
11. Growing importance of non-faculty staff in student mentoring and relationships—virtuous, non-threatening role models

15 Servant-Teaching Practices (Shalom in Action)

1. Grow gratitude in your heart.
2. Address students' major first-day concerns: *Will the teacher like me?* and *Can I do well in this class?*
3. Employ ongoing course/instructor evaluations—with reports to students.
4. Create hospitable and covenantal syllabi for community and for mutual responsibilities.
5. Develop a semester-long, personal-professional schedule before each term begins.
6. Teach to your strengths and joys.
7. Reduce student (and your own) busywork.
8. Assign shorter, engaging texts.
9. Conduct a pre-course student survey.
10. Send the syllabus a week in advance for first-day feedback and discussion.
11. Plan extra time for each class session.
12. Use index cards or text messaging to start discussions on sensitive topics.
13. Announce same-day “café” hours” instead of just regular office hours.
14. Record your lecture-presentations.
15. Provide a friendly way for students to challenge grades.