

Why the Church Needs Scholars

Most of my colleagues in the European Academic Network testify to encountering various forms of anti-intellectualism in their churches and families. This talk will make a case for why scholarship is so crucial for the Church. It will also explore why there is anti-intellectualism in Christian circles and how we can respond lovingly and patiently to fellow believers who are anti-intellectual or skeptical about higher education.

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I. Why are some believers cautious or opposed to higher education?

- A. Much of higher education is opposed to a robust evangelical faith.
- B. Many Christians who have pursued advanced education walked away from the Lord.
- C. Many Christians become proud and arrogant as they get more education.
- D. Sadly, some Christians in the academy give little evidence of the fervency of their faith.
- E. During persecution evangelicals were denied access to higher education.

II. What excuses are given for opposing education?

- A. “We don’t need education. All we need is faith, prayer and the Holy Spirit.”
- B. “Good Christians should not sully their minds with the thoughts and philosophies of the world.”
- C. “Why waste time on education when missions, evangelism, and church planting are far more urgent tasks for the Church?”

III. What are the limitations of higher education?

- A. Education does not make us more righteous
- B. Education does not make us smarter.
- C. Education does not necessarily make us wiser.

- D. We need more than education in our service for God.
- E. Reason and education without a relationship with God can be toxic.
- F. God often uses uneducated and poorly educated men and women to do His work.

IV. **Why does the Church need Scholars?**

A. **God created the mind and commands us to seek knowledge and wisdom.**

1. Luke 10:27
2. Proverbs 10:14
3. Proverbs 15:14
4. Proverbs 18:15
5. Proverbs 25:2
6. Romans 12:1-2
7. 1 Peter 3:15

8. What was the first thing Jesus was known for as He was growing into adulthood?

9. Anti-intellectualism is...
 - a. A diminishing of our God-created nature.
 - b. An attack on truth and the Gospel.

B. **The Bible shows the importance of engaging the academy**

1. New Testament.

2. Old Testament.

C. **Ideas have consequences.**

1. Souls are attached to minds and bodies and the ideas in the mind affect the receptivity of the soul to the Gospel.
2. “False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel.”
J. Gresham Machen
3. “We’re winning their hearts, but losing their minds.” Peter Kuzmic
4. Responding to anti-intellectualism: Even if we were to agree that “all that matters is saving souls,” we would for that very reason insist that education is important and that the Church needs scholars.

D. **If we want human life to be shaped by Christ, we must engage with higher education**

1. “The university is a clear-cut fulcrum with which to move the world. Change the university and you change the world.” Charles Malik

2. Historically, because leaders are trained there, universities have been centers of change – for good and for ill.
3. “Responsible Christians face two tasks – that of saving the soul and that of saving the mind.” Charles Malik
4. Responding to anti-intellectualism
 - a. We spread the Gospel most effectively when we understand how true the Bible really is.
 - b. If we are serious about evangelizing Europe, then the Church must be serious about education – education at all levels – primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

E. Scholars help the Church fulfill its mission.

1. Scholars help us understand the Bible.
2. Scholars help the Church communicate the Gospel and defend biblical truth.
 - a. “To be ignorant and simple now – not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground – would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defence but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen.” C. S. Lewis, “Learning in War-Time”
 - b. Anti-intellectualism leaves the Church vulnerable, because it does not equip believers to think and to respond to attacks on their faith.
 - c. Anti-intellectualism sounds pious, but it easily drifts into a deconstructionist denial that God is the God of objective and propositional truth that can be known and that His Truth can be stated in propositional terms.
3. Scholars help believers develop and live with a Christian worldview.
 - a. “For a Christian, the mind is important because God is important.” Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*
 - b. Christian academics are in the front line of the battle as they develop biblical responses to the attacks of Satan against truth, righteousness, and the Bible.
 - c. Anti-intellectualism is a denial of Christ’s Lordship. While it often postures as being more dependent on the Spirit and prayer, it fails to recognize that Christ’s lordship is cosmic and all-encompassing and not just spiritual.
4. Scholars are better able to reach the world of education with the Gospel.
 - a. Academics can hear the Gospel best from fellow professors whom they respect and who have earned the right to be heard who are Christians.

- b. University students are also more likely to consider the claims of the Gospel because of the influence of a Christian professor.
- c. Christian professors can encourage Christian students to be faithful to Christ.

- F. Throughout history, God has used scholars to play a key role in His work.
 - 1. Early Church Fathers
 - 2. Irish monks
 - 3. Nestorians
 - 4. Protestant Reformers
 - 5. John and Charles Wesley
 - 6. Early American Christian leaders
 - 7. Modern Christian scholars

God has placed you in one of the most strategic places of influence in Europe—in a university or seminary. Serve Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Recommended Reading on Why the Church Needs Scholars:

Guinness, Os. *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do About It*. Grand Rapids: Hourglass Books, 1994. This book provides a clear diagnosis and biblical plan for responding to the anti-intellectualism of many Christians.

Malik, Charles. *The Two Tasks*. Westchester, Illinois: Crossways Books, 1980. A classic brief address on the two central tasks of the Christian—saving the soul and saving the mind.

Moreland, J. P. *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*. 2nd ed. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2012.

Noll, Mark A. *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. 180 pp. Excellent introduction to the importance of scholarship for the Christian life and insights into how to do our scholarship Christianly.

Stott, John R. W. *Your Mind Matters; the Place of the Mind in the Christian Life*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973. 64 pp. Brief but powerful case on the Christian's use of the mind.