

KNOWING & DOING

C · S · LEWIS INSTITUTE



A Teaching Quarterly for Discipleship of Heart and Mind

From the Summer 2014 issue of Knowing & Doing:



FELLOWS FEATURE

C.S. Lewis Institute: *A Fellow's Journey*

Interview with Colleen O'Malley

C.S. Lewis Institute Mentor & Fellow

Tell us how and when you came to Christ.

Praise the Lord that I get to say: I have never known a time without Christ. I love my parents for a lot of things, but first and foremost for that. We were always encouraged to prayer, Bible study, and theological musings around the dinner table. (I promise it was more fun than I just made it sound.) Their faith was probably confirmed as my own through service with a high school retreat organization called Chrysalis and involvement with Young Life.

How did the C.S. Lewis Institute's Fellows Program equip you to become a more mature and effective disciple of Christ?

Two words: discipline and prayer. It's just not fun to show up to small group unprepared to discuss the readings with those amazing women! And so I must read. A few of the books were old favorites, but the writers' wisdom seemed all the more targeted to me during this time of actively seeking the Lord, most especially as they focused toward a new discipline of prayer.

Give an example of how the Fellows Program helped you in your life as a follower of Jesus.

So I pray in the morning now. In the past I've read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's strong suggestion to do so and wished to be more like him. But once I started the program, I found that throughout the day I was suddenly (or had I just never noticed before?) being asked questions about my faith. For me, starting the day in prayer was key to resting in the knowledge that any answer I'd give was cloaked in the Holy Spirit—and maybe a little caffeine. In fact, Spirit-filled answers are really a very happy by-product, as the time spent with the Lord in prayer has become less a discipline I strive to practice and more a conversation I treasure.

How has your experience with the Institute influenced your approach to sharing the gospel message with others?

I think I'm just looking more closely for the opportunity to share. I've found that most people are pretty open to talking about their own experiences with faith, which then opens the door for us to do the same. If someone tells me she meditates and prays while practicing yoga, I ask who she's praying to. If another claims an experience was "almost spiritual," I ask what that means to him. The knowledge strengthened through the Institute most certainly provides context and confidence around those discussions, but the discipline of prayer nurtured through my mentor relationship and times with those small-group ladies remains the foundation.

How did the Fellows Program help you integrate your faith and your professional life? Your family life?

It's tough to read and talk about how God infuses all things and not picture angel armies walking into work with us, especially some of the buildings here in DC. We are placed in jobs and careers for many reasons, but certainly always to perform excellently and to share the gospel with and pray for those we meet at work. Also after serving as a mentor this past year, I've been looking into certificates on leadership coaching, so that I might more professionally practice those relational skills.

My family and friends have endured bravely my need for external processing throughout the program, and I have experienced a renewed desire to show them love as God has shown it to me.

What would you tell a friend or work colleague about the Fellows Program?

I usually describe the program as a continuing education program for my faith. In fact, just talking about the Fellows Program has been the easiest way to initiate conversations on faith, as continuing education efforts are a constant topic in DC. Plus, most people seem to have no idea that the "Narnia guy" was a theologian and Jesus-follower. I try to break it to them gently.

If they are believing friends and colleagues, I also tell them to just sign on. I know I'm so very glad that I did. ❖



Colleen O'Malley has been a learning and talent development consultant for Deloitte Consulting LLP for the past 6 years. In that time, she has supported multiple agencies and staffs at varying levels throughout the Federal Government, largely in learning strategy, development, and delivery, and the change management associated with those efforts. Colleen completed the C.S. Lewis Fellows program Year One in 2013, and currently serves as a mentor to the class of 2014. A lifelong Christian, Colleen credits the Lord and her parents with instilling in her a sense of and need for Jesus, as well as a desire to make Him known.

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2014 C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE, *Discipleship of Heart and Mind*

In the legacy of C.S. Lewis, the Institute endeavors to develop disciples who can articulate, defend, and live faith in Christ through personal and public life.