

KNOWING & DOING

C · S · LEWIS INSTITUTE



A Teaching Quarterly for Discipleship of Heart and Mind

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C.S. Lewis Institute Fellow Q&A

*An interview with Rob Shepherd
C.S. Lewis Institute Mentor & Fellow*

Tell us how and when you came to Christ.

I did not attend church with any regularity during my childhood and only occasionally during my early college years. My wife's strong faith and weekly attendance changed my perspective on the community of faith. We started going to church together toward the end of our college experience, which really encouraged me to seek Christ. He found me shortly thereafter, while I was in pilot training with the Air Force. I would describe the moment as very Wesleyan: "I felt my heart strangely warmed" one day during the worship service and was led to profess my faith during the altar call.

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

Although I understood my justification when I came to faith, my conscience had been badly seared and my sanctification journey was rocky for many years. The Fellows Program has helped me to walk by the Spirit by giving me the intellectual background I needed to appreciate my faith and a deeper understanding of the relational nature of our triune God as a model for our lives in community. I am still far from the finish line, but I know that God will continue to work in my life to bring it to His perfect completion (Phil. 1:6).

Give an example of how the Fellows Program helped you as a follower of Jesus?

Although I tried to live as a "good" person for many years, I still found myself living in the flesh by relying on my own strength to fight the spiritual battles in life. My Fellows studies have shown the absolute absurdity of such an attempt, and I have begun to surrender more of my life to Christ with the help of my small group, my mentors, and my Fellows class members. I still struggle with complete surrender and continue to rely on the Spirit to convict and empower me whenever I don't sacrifice for Christ's sake (Matt. 16:25).

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

Several members of my immediate family are growing in their walk with Christ, and my enhanced understanding of Scripture and God's call on our lives has made it easier for me to effectively encourage their spiritual growth.

I've also felt the Holy Spirit speaking through me in some of these conversations; I feel this comes directly from my increased sensitivity to His presence because of the Fellows experience.

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

One theme of the Fellows Program that most resonates with me is that it is not supposed to be an end in itself; rather, it is “unto something” in my life. I decided early on that I needed to take my walk with Christ into the cockpit with me in my capacity as a captain at a major airline. The airline industry is not well known for its Puritanical attitudes and behaviors, so it seems like fertile ground for a positive Christian witness. I believe my Fellows studies have allowed me to enter the fray “equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17).

Similarly, the Spirit has used my time in the Fellows Program to convict me with regard to my duties as the spiritual head of my household and to better prepare me to accept those responsibilities—and the inevitable warfare that comes with them.

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

I first learned about the Institute and Fellows Program through a coworker, and I am grateful for his proactivity. I have discussed my experience with several people and have to restrain myself from raving about it! I talk about how I have been challenged, convicted, and encouraged along the way, and my bottom line is this: I have been transformed. I firmly believe that all disciples, from newly reborn to those who have long walked with Christ, can benefit from the program and can carry their growth into the world to make it better while we wait for the day of the Lord. ❖



Rob Shepherd is a Baltimore-based Captain for Southwest Airlines. He is also a retired Air Force pilot, having spent twenty-five years flying mostly airlift aircraft and serving in three command positions. Rob holds degrees in Computer Science from the U.S. Naval Academy and University of Idaho, completed the C.S. Lewis Institute Year Two Fellows Program in 2014, is currently serving as a mentor for the Year One Fellows class of 2015 in Annapolis. He also serves as a Senior Fellow and mentor with the Severn Leadership Group, an Annapolis-based group that seeks to inspire lives of selfless courage and service to others. Rob and his wife, Mary Beth, have been married for twenty-six years, have two children, and live in Pasadena, Maryland.

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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.