

## AFTERWORD

*Barbara M. Ragan*

Perhaps because I have not had a lifetime association with Nazarene higher education, the task chosen to explain why the end goal of Nazarene education is unique was, initially, somewhat a surprise to me. The curious part is that most educational systems would say they have a better graduation rate; a better rate of placing their graduates in lucrative or prestigious positions; a lower cost per student; more enticing programs and extracurricular activities; and so on. However, we have focused on the difference Christianity, including both salvation and sanctification, makes in the teaching arena. It took just a moment as I began this task to realize that focusing on those differences was not so curious after all.

I retired as a professor and chair of the English and modern languages department at Mount Vernon Nazarene University in 2009, after spending nine years there as a faculty member. Also I have served on the faculty and staff at several public universities and, thus, I can testify to some differences that are readily apparent between the typical university and a Nazarene institution of higher education. Although these are alluded to in the previous articles, I would like to add them more substantively to the list.

I think the first thing that thrilled my heart as I began my teaching career at a Nazarene university was seeing the mass of people walking toward the beautiful chapel to meet for the first chapel service of the year. I had never seen the staff, faculty, and students all meet together at one time for any reason at a public university. True, some public universities have a faculty convocation at the beginning of the academic year, but only faculty attend and the meeting is short. I suppose there might be a similar staff meeting, but I have never known of one. And I have never known of all the students meeting for one purpose. At Nazarene universities, this type of meeting occurs often—usually three times a week. Thus, corporate worship sets the foundation for the educa-

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tional endeavors of Nazarene colleges and universities. What a wonderful way to build an educational institution! And what a thrill to see a microcosm of the glorification of God that takes place in heaven!

Second, I was struck by the will to work of the faculty and staff. And often the students followed their example. Paul

writes, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Col. 3:23). Faculty at Nazarene colleges and universities take this verse to heart, many of them committing time and resources far beyond expectation. It is true that many faculty members at public universities are hard workers, but for Nazarene faculty members, the work is “for the Lord,” and they work with the eager hands, hearts, and heads of Nehemiah and his fellow builders. One faculty member I know would, at the beginning of each semester, go to his classrooms and pray at each desk for the student who would sit there in his class that semester. Others worked long, extra hours on reports and projects to save the school money. Sports buffs would serve as assistant coaches for no money at all.

Nazarene faculty members—and staff—serve God by working in the capacity in which they are needed and to the extent to which they are needed. Students see this willingness to work and adopt the work ethic that God expects. Nazarene faculty members accept the call of God and work for Him.

Third, I would like to re-emphasize the truth that many of the authors in this book mention: Christians are to love one another, and Nazarenes do indeed follow Christ’s command to “[S]erve one another in love” (Gal. 5:13b). Faculty members on Nazarene campuses meet the same challenges that faculty members on other campuses meet. Yet they maintain love for one another, for the staff members who assist them, and for the students who have come to them for instruction. Faculty meetings are opened with prayer, often with those who have special needs requesting prayer for the particular problem they are facing. Classes



are begun with a devotional and prayer; often students share their needs so the entire class can pray for one another. And there is an interchange of help, brothers and sisters working together for love of one another. I will never forget that one of the vice presidents came to our condo and did his best to fix an electrical problem. Nor will I forget the many prayers and expressions of love when my husband battled cancer and our son was deployed to the Middle East four times. Nazarene faculty do love their brothers and sisters in Christ and, thus, set a wonderful example for the students who are on campus and the community members with whom they come in contact. They give the best of their hearts, their souls, their minds, and their strength to love the Lord.

In conclusion, I would like to point out several more key qualities of Nazarene education that are included in this document. Mark Mountain believes a goal of paramount importance is helping students discover God's plan for their lives, thus aiding them in choosing a vocation that will "change their lives and the world in which they live." The

idea of prevenient grace is approached several times, most obviously by Tim Crutcher and Mark Maddix. A professor who believes that God is searching for a relationship with each student cannot help but consider that principle as he or she teaches. When a student develops a relationship with God, it begins

a life of "spiritual wholeness" and, as the student continues to develop that relationship, he or she gains membership in the family of God (Lyke). Mark Mann emphasizes the development of the relationship, stating that the "experience of Christian holiness [is] absolutely central to the Christian gospel and must remain central to the mission of Nazarene higher education." Because of the importance of spiritual wholeness and the call to holiness, Mann goes on to say, "sharp

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bifurcation of mind and heart, of classroom and chapel, is caustic . . . and therefore should be foreign to the aims of a holiness education.” Peter Rae warns against “the isolation of the ivory tower” and “a church’s [distrust of] the voice of its colleges.” Mark Maddix re-emphasizes this truth, stating that “[h]uman experience is not separated between the sacred and the secular.” He further emphasizes the vast value of human life, as does Lena Welch when she says, “all people are valued by God.” Otherwise, God would not have sent his Son to die for human beings. Recognition of human value and development of a godly life brings about transformation in a student’s life, and these qualities are facilitated by deeply reverent and humble teachers (Welch and Parrott). Such faculty should “seek to be examples of self-surrender to their students, peers, and society” (Quantz). Finally, Linda Alexander adds the soul-stirring truth that “a highly effective Christian educator can . . . change eternity.” What more could a Nazarene college or university faculty member hope to achieve? ■