Alumni

GORDON CONWELL

Alumni Spotlight: Daniel Overdorf (DMin ’05)

Current title: President of Johnson University

Family: Wife: Carrie, Children: 3 children

Favorite professor: Dr. Haddon Robinson

Favorite class: Preaching and the Text

A favorite memory: My favorite memories are of evening conversations with fellow students from my cohort, discussing the future of preaching, ministry, and the church.

Please tell us more about your role as President at Johnson University.

I am the eighth president in the university’s 132-year history. We are a Christian university, devoted to advancing the mission of Christ. We have just over 1000 students, mostly undergraduates but with a few master’s programs and a PhD in Leadership Studies. My role involves working with our Senior Leadership Team to administrate the day-to-day functioning of the university, leading in envisioning the future and developing strategies for future growth, and developing relationships with partners who believe in and support our mission.

How did God weave together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now?

As I was completing my doctorate at Gordon-Conwell, Johnson University offered me the opportunity to join their faculty to teach preaching. I had served for ten years in church ministry and loved (and still love) the church. But the opportunity in Christian higher education gave me a chance to multiply myself, so that I could not only impact one church and one pulpit, but I could invest myself into students who lead churches and extend the kingdom in numerous ways around the world. I served as a professor for nineteen years before stepping into the role of president in the summer of 2024. As president, I continue to teach a preaching class each semester.

What are some things you love about serving as President there at Johnson?

I love the relationships that I get to have with students and alumni. There are few things in life that are more exciting and fulfilling than watching a student grow and then launch into the world doing ministry for the kingdom. Also, I enjoy the opportunity to provide leadership and to work with other leaders to envision how we can pursue our historic purpose in the next generation**.**

What are the challenges of the President's role in general, and in your context specifically?

There is a great deal of weight that comes with the role of president. The decisions that make it to my desk are often difficult and consequential. Additionally, higher education in general, and Christian higher education in particular, is in a difficult season. There is much to navigate in contemporary culture.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your work in higher education?

My time at Gordon-Conwell gave me the credentials needed to enter Christian higher education. Far beyond credentials, though, I learned a great deal about myself, grew in my leadership, and developed sharper critical thinking skills. That season of my life was a significant season of growth and development. God used my Gordon-Conwell experience, along with other educational, life, and ministry experiences, to prepare me for my roles as professor and president.

Do you have any publications or links you would like to share?

My publications include:

- Preaching: A Simple Approach to the Sacred Task (Kregel, 2022)
- A Death Well Lived: A Novel (Crosslink, 2020)
- One Year to Better Preaching: 52 Exercises to Hone Your Skills (Kregel, 2013)
- Rediscovering Community: What the Bible Says About the Church (College Press, 2012)
- Ministering to Your Minister (Crosslink, 2012)
- Applying the Sermon: How to Balance Biblical Integrity and Cultural Relevance (Kregel, 2009)