Alumni
GORDON CONWELL

Alumni Spotlight: Sandra Richter (MATS '90)

Current title: Robert H. Gundry Chair of Biblical Studies at Westmont College

Family: Husband: Steven Tsoukalas (MDiv '90), Children: Noël Christianna, Elise Anastasis

Favorite professor: Dr. Meredith Kline, Dr. Gary Pratico, & Dr. Garth Rosell

Favorite class: Dr. Meredith Kline's ThM Seminar in Biblical Theology

Favorite memory: Hands down travelling to the Land of Israel for the first time under Dr. Gary Pratico's expert guidance with many of my favorite people from Gordon-Conwell.

Please tell us about your area of expertise and what courses you teach.

My expertise is in Hebrew Bible; I'm a graduate of Harvard University's Near Eastern Language and Civilizations department. I teach at the undergraduate and graduate levels: the ever-present "Introduction to Old Testament", upper-level exegesis in Hebrew and English, Sryo-Palestinian Archaeology, Cultural Environment, Hebrew Language, Supervised Ministry and Environmental Stewardship and Theology. I have spent a great deal of my career in Israel doing field archaeology and historical geography, and more time teaching laity in an array of contexts.

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

My training at Gordon-Conwell was essential for shaping me into who I am as a professional. I came to Gordon-Conwell as an Assemblies of God youth pastor, with little or no awareness of what the academic world looked like. God used my time in seminary to redirect my calling toward the academy. It was through my Gordon-Conwell courses and the advice of my professors that I wound up at Harvard University pursuing a PhD. The network that emerged from Gordon-Conwell landed me in a dozen places I could never have accessed on my own.

What are some things you love about your roles as a faculty member, professor, and/or researcher?

I love teaching, and I love teaching Bible. In my current role, I get to be the one who evangelizes the uninterested into their own story, who trains the committed for their callings, and who answers the longstanding questions of lifelong learners. This business of introducing the Church to their ancestors in the faith as real people who lived in real places and exercised real faith—what an enormous privilege. As a speaker and an author, I get to bring that task further. My books and bible studies bring mature and challenging material to the church; my academic essays and monographs bring new perspectives to the academy; my textbooks offer tools to other professors. I love what I do, and I am so grateful for the training I received that prepared me to do it.

What are the current challenges of teaching in higher education, being a faculty member in general, and in your context specifically?

There are so many. But I would say that the perennial issue for anyone who seeks to serve Christ in a fallen world is that being a Christian in *any* context disrupts the all-too-human commitment to comfort—our own and that of our friends and associates. Christian higher education, Christian faculty, and Christian administrators need a regular re-awakening of the kind of courage that is essential to Kingdom purposes. Unfortunately, that sort of courage is rare.

What has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence in your current role, or the way you engage in your role?

Gordon-Conwell profoundly expanded my horizons as a young scholar. Its biggest impact on my life and current role was teaching me *how* to do exegesis. This business of allowing the biblical authors to teach *us*, as opposed imposing our will/issues/ideologies on *them*, was the core of my biblical education at Gordon-Conwell. This foundation (aka hermeneutic) has shaped every task I have undertaken since my graduation—be it in the church or in the academy.

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

I've got a lot of technical work out there, but I would most love to share with my past seminary colleagues the book that could be described as my soul on paper: *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament.* The book is dedicated to Meredith Kline, and the title is a bit of a spin-off of Jon Levenson of Harvard Divinity's *Sinai & Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. This book launched a bible study series created for the church. Dedicated to getting our people past "Christianity 101." We have six titles at this point. And we have just refilmed the core curriculum, "The Epic of Eden:

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Understanding the Old Testament as Your Story" with the goal of an October re-release: Understanding the Old Testament (rerelease in August), Deborah, Psalms, Ruth, Jonah, Isaiah.