Alumni

GORDON CONWELL

Alumni Spotlight: Kenneth Barnes (MATS ’89)

Titles: Mockler-Phillips Professor of Workplace Theology and Business Ethics, Director of the Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Public Square

Family: Wife: Debby Barnes; 3 grown children and 4 grandchildren.

Favorite professors: Gary Pratico (Hebrew) Meredith Kline (Hermeneutics—and he taught me how to “think theologically”!)

Favorite class: Biblical Hermeneutics with Meredith Kline

Favorite memory: When I came home one day to find my wife Debby lying on the couch in our apartment in Building D with the other seminary wives praying and singing Psalms over her. We later found out that she has Multiple Sclerosis, but that image of love and support that she received that day was the perfect example of the Community of Christ we shared with our Gordon-Conwell friends and neighbors!

Please tell us about your area of expertise and what courses you teach at Gordon-Conwell.

My area of expertise at Gordon-Conwell is the intersection of Faith, Work and Economics. I teach courses in Theology of Work, Business Ethics, Economics, Leadership, Apologetics, and Church Finances.

How did God weave together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you back to Gordon-Conwell as a faculty member?

When I first came to Gordon-Conwell as a student, I was already a business executive. I assumed that I would finish my degree, become ordained, and leave the business world—but God had other ideas. Instead, I ended up combining a 30+ year career as an international business executive with 30+ years as a pastor and a scholar, without which I wouldn’t have the experience or the gravitas to teach what I teach or write what I write. God really does work in strange ways, and it is by God’s providence that I have come back to Gordon-Conwell!

What are some things you love about your role as a faculty member?

The things I love most about teaching at Gordon-Conwell are: 1) my interactions with students, not just in class but in the cafeteria and the hallways and at chapel; 2) my interactions with other scholars—not in faculty meetings, mind you—but through serendipitous contact, and by getting to know them and their families over mealtimes; it’s a great blessing; 3) writing—I publish a lot, as do all of us on faculty, and it’s the discipline of writing, that really keeps us on our toes (IMHO)!

What's unique about teaching at Gordon-Conwell?

I've had the privilege of teaching at places as diverse as Oxford University and Ridley College, Melbourne, but what sets Gordon-Conwell apart for me is the fact that we begin EVERYTHING we do here with prayer, and we bring EVERYTHING we do here under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and that sets us apart from most institutions of higher education.

How has teaching in a multidenominational setting shaped your own faith, ministry, or view of the Church as a whole?

I have both studied and taught at denominational institutions, and I can say without hesitation that our uncompromising commitment to the authority of God's Word, combined with our respect for a diversity of religious expressions, has helped to form not only my Christian identity but, I suspect, the Christian identity of everyone who comes through our doors.

How has your own Gordon-Conwell education served you in your academic work, or impacted how you do your work?

If it wasn't for my Gordon-Conwell degree in Biblical Studies, I might never have gone into academia. The very first job I applied for was at Oxford University's Department of Continuing Education, where I taught Introduction to the Bible, Systematic Theology, and Church History. When I got the job, I asked them, "why me?" (as there were no doubt other more senior scholars available). "It was your degree from Gordon-Conwell," they told me, "We thought it would be nice if the person teaching this stuff, actually believed it." That says it all!

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

Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Public Square

Books and Book Chapters:

Sabbath as Resilience (Wipf & Stock, 2025)

Redeeming Capitalism (Eerdmans, 2018)

Light from the Dreaming Spires: Reflections on Ministry to Generation Y (Resource Publications, 2017)

Faith, Work and Economics, a Mission of the Church, a Mission to the

Church in “Transforming Work: Missional Perspectives for the Church in the World” Edited by Darren Cronshaw. Leiden: Brill, 2024. (pg. 200-220)

Forward to “Abraham Kuyper on Business & Economics” Edited by Jordon J. Ballor. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, Action Institute for the Study of Religion with Liberty, 2021.

Business Ethics and Religious Belief in “Routledge Companion to Business Ethics”: Abingdon, Oxon [UK]: Routledge 2018. (pg. 148-164)