

Foreword

I recently ran across a bunch of papers that I had written in my education classes thirty years ago, papers in which I carefully articulated my philosophy of education and told my teachers why I wanted to be a teacher, too. My writing is impossibly idealistic, full of dreams of ungraded classrooms, meaningful discussions, substantial small group interaction, and life-changing learning experiences.

Thirty years later, I am wiser, and I am still pretty idealistic. But nothing in my experience or my training or my starry-eyed disposition could have prepared me for a class that exceeded every expectation and more. Abundantly beyond anything I could ask or think. In the Spring semester of 2003, seventeen students met every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon in a noisy stuffy windowless little room far away in a corner on west campus somewhere, and magic happened.

To be honest, the workload was crushing: nine books, four essays, nearly 2,000 pages of thick, theological reading. Unbelievable! In a fast fourteen weeks, we wrote six short papers, took twenty quizzes, and worked our way through bibliographies and rough drafts and peer reviews and three different versions of a major research paper. Amazing! And then pulled those disparate papers together into this one book. Extraordinary! With so much going on, what was the mood of it all? Resentful? Frustrated? Overwhelmed? Irritable? Sure, yea, no doubt. That all cropped up from time to time. But mostly we talked and argued and prayed and laughed and cried and agreed and disagreed and ended up staying up half the night to read some more and talk some more and send a few more emails and laugh and cry and journal and fight and work and pray and learn. Class time was a celebration, a lively interaction of peers, rolling up our intellectual sleeves and engaging with the material, looking for glimpses of God-Light in our reading, our conversation, and our daily lives, and finding it just everywhere.

It was just like I dreamed it could be. Only better. Because it wasn't just substantial and fulfilling and important. The whole thing was just so much fun.

The book you hold in your hand is a special edition of our class project, a book we wrote and compiled for those who joined us in the journey. These papers are great. But the memories you hold in your heart are the real stuff this class was made of.

*Maana Gayle
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