

Engaging in
Counseling
Research
*with Curiosity
and Wisdom*

A CHRISTIAN
INTEGRATIVE
APPROACH

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and Paul Loosemore



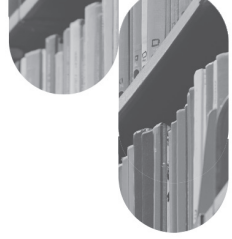
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by Kristen Kansiewicz and Paul Loosemore

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ONE

The Heart *of a* Researcher

BEFORE WE CAN BEGIN OUR JOURNEY together as fellow researchers, we must first pause and examine God and ourselves. Think of it as checking to be sure your water bottle is filled and your emergency food supplies are packed before starting up an advanced hiking trail. Perhaps, like good researchers, we start with questions: Who is God, and who are we as humans? How might our relationship with God influence our approach to research? What is God's intention for you even in this first step of your research path? While parts of ourselves may feel trepidation about a research course, other parts may be excited or at least curious. Leaning into both of those internal places is a wonderful way to explore further questions. In this chapter, we are going to tap into that God-given curiosity and discover what it might mean to flourish as a part of God's design for us. We'll explore the various parts of self and the relational way that a strong attachment to God sets us up to do good research. By the end of the chapter, we hope you will feel freshly inspired to let your curiosity run wild and connect with God in the process.

CURIOSITY: A LONGING TO KNOW

Let us start with the beautiful Christian reality that we were created in the image of God: *imago Dei*. We are set apart from every other living thing on the earth in this way. What we see in the end of

Genesis 1 through the beginning of Genesis 2, as we read about being created in the image of God, will frame our approach in this book. First, God is a Creator. An innovator. He comes up with an idea (framed as a group conversation, reflecting God's complex relationship within himself) to make humans "in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). Second, he commands humans to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28), and he gives us a pretty extensive starter pack of supplies (Gen 1:29-30). If we are created beings who have an inborn inclination toward God's way of being, and he is an innovator, then it seems only logical that we would be natural innovators. Unlike God, however, we are not all-knowing and all-powerful. Thus, our innovation doesn't stem from a place exclusively within ourselves. While the scientific community may aim to arrive at the capacity to form life from nothing, so far we have failed to recreate this basic starting place of God. And even if we were to accomplish such a creative act, it would be merely a copycat effort at best. As created beings with a penchant for innovation, yet without God's unlimited knowledge and power, we have a different starting point for innovation: curiosity.

Imagine being handed a world filled with interesting things, some living and others nonliving, and being told to govern it. Perhaps this is not unlike setting a child in a sandbox with a pail and shovel, some trucks, a few figurines, a hose, and freedom to play. Any parent of a toddler who wishes to keep their house tidy would likely agree this seems like a messy prospect, but God is a daring parent who doesn't need everything to stay neat and clean. He wants us to play, build, and get our hands dirty along the way. Genesis 3:17-19 suggests that with the curse on the world came a resistance to our enjoyment of messy, exploratory play. Our minds matured with age and became jaded with a knowledge of evil, and mess became work. A world that was once a playground became a

labor camp as we moved from free children to adult prisoners. From order to disorder.

What would happen if we were to pair redemption with the research process? What if we imagine engaging in God's design for us and reverse-engineer the process? While perhaps not fully possible within the clutches of a fallen world, in Christ we have an opportunity to live closer to our intended state. What if research helps return us to the very first state of play to which God invited us? What if fear or frustration or boredom didn't govern the research process? What might that look like?

Place yourself back in Genesis 1–2. Or perhaps envision yourself as that kid in the sandbox. You've been told to play, and freedom is all you have ever known. Imagine that you don't feel limited by the confines of the sandbox because you trust your parent, who told you to govern just that area. Your secure attachment to God allows you to be both fully curious and fully creative. What types of worlds might you build? Like a toddler, your free play is intermittently paused to reconnect with your parent. This is a reminder of your security to run off and play again.

In this framework, the freedom of exploration and innovation driven by curiosity is rooted in your sense of security in God. As such, a critical practice for Christians engaged in the research process is developing our relationship with God and pausing to reconnect with him. Genesis 3 and the rest of the Bible remind us that, if we explore and innovate without him, we are likely to wander from the sandbox. We may feel lost or fearful, or forget the excitement of the original command to govern the world with an incredible box of tools. Like children, we need periodic attachment moments to our Creator Father. Just a touchpoint that allows him to say, "I'm still here," and for us to feel the comfort and freedom of that reality once again.

Drawing Close to God: A Meditation for Researchers

We encourage you to record yourself reading this meditation slowly. After doing so, you can close your eyes and listen to your own voice praying these words. Take time to regularly connect your researcher heart with the Creator God.

The Prayer of the Researcher

Almighty God, Maker of heaven and earth, I humbly sit at your feet. Thank you for your goodness and your creativity. I long to know more about you and your world. What would you have me search for in this season of my life? I ask you to urge me toward your concerns for the world. Give me the courage to look under every rock that interests me, even when it feels heavy or scary to explore. Bring me peace when I sit in unsettled places. Give me joy when I get consumed or distracted. It is a joy to delight in your presence and explore your wonders. Thank you for all you have made.

God's Words to the Researcher (adapted from Is 40:28; 43:1-2; 2 Pet 3:9 NIV)

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

“I am not slow in keeping my promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, I am patient with you.”

We were not designed to explore, innovate, and govern the world in God's absence. He did not set the world in motion and simply hand over the keys. He walked in the garden where man and woman were tilling the soil as their act of play and freedom. He

made himself known to them and does so to us today. He created us to search for him, to imitate him, and to maintain a curiosity that would lead us into even deeper exploration, a never-ending venture into him and his community. Later in this chapter we will explore ways in which research is relational, but here we invite you to consider that the heart of the redeemed researcher is driven by a God-given and God-sustained curiosity.

FLOURISHING: THRIVING AS GOD INTENDED

God invites us to enter a place of shalom with him—bringing peace, wellness, and life to the research process. Shalom can be defined as “universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight.”¹ If curiosity is the seed for research, and God is the soil in whom we are planted, what would it take for us to thrive in this garden of shalom as researchers? How might we flourish and blossom in this process of researcher development, from novice to seasoned explorer? The Harvard University Human Flourishing Program’s “Flourish Measure” picks up on biblical anthropology (what is true about people) to share five domains that may be helpful for us to consider as we explore these questions: happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships.² We will take each of these domains in turn, looking at how we might operate in each to flourish in the research process, then return to the analogy of a garden to draw our thoughts together.

Happiness and life satisfaction. Perhaps starting with happiness and life satisfaction doesn’t feel fair if you are in a research course and have some daunting assignments ahead. You might imagine

¹Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Eerdmans, 1995), 10.

²D. Weziak-Białowolska, E. McNeely, and T. J. VanderWeele, “Human Flourishing in Cross Cultural Settings: Evidence from the US, China, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Mexico,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019): 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01269>.

happiness as being free of worry and full of only feelings of enjoyment, and perhaps *life satisfaction* as less struggle and more easy wins. We would argue that both happiness and life satisfaction are byproducts of growth and challenge. Accomplishing things and living the life we were designed for leads to feelings of happiness and satisfaction. However, this process does not have to feel unenjoyable. If you have a white-knuckling approach to your course, this is hardly a picture of flourishing.

We invite you here to ask, Does it have to feel hard? Is that the only approach? What if God wants you to flourish and thrive in every area of your life, including in your research methods class, in taking on a dissertation, or in submitting an article to yet another publisher who might reject your work? Let's return to the idea of work versus play. Approaching research as hard work is likely to feel—well, hard. We get lost in the mundane or confusing task and lose sight of the end goal of knowing something we didn't know before. In contrast, when we approach research as play, there is a mental switch that frees us up to simply enjoy ourselves. If you have ever hiked to the top of a mountain to gaze on a beautiful vista, you might be able to imagine what we are driving at here. It is both fun and difficult to hike to the top of a mountain. And those who do not attempt the climb do not experience the happiness and satisfaction that comes with looking out from the apex.

When thinking about research as play, there are developmental aspects to consider—just as there are when thinking about real-life play. Have you ever tried playing Monopoly with a five-year-old? Unless you just want a free-association experience and paper bills scattered around the room, you're better off trying Candy Land. Play is only play if you are at the developmental stage to understand and enjoy what you are doing. Similarly, when you try to tackle the results section of a research article in the early weeks

of an undergraduate or master's-level research methods course, it will not feel like play. Very little happiness or life satisfaction comes from that experience. Ask yourself, What is my developmental phase as a researcher? Respond to this. It might be appropriate to just read an article's abstract and the discussion section to start. Choose an article with a title that sounds intriguing, or if you are not able to select the article yourself, try to connect with the reason it might have been assigned to you. Why this article? Why this topic?

To dive in further, grab a highlighter and mark any words you do not understand in the abstract or discussion sections. Ask your instructor to explain these words. Most likely, you'll be able to grab onto most of the discussion section, where you will read about the implications of the study. What do the findings of this article contribute to the world? What future research needs to be done? What ideas come to your mind that stimulate curiosity and excitement? Consider keeping a research journal in which you can write down these ideas. If you were going to do one of the future studies suggested by the article, what might it look like? (It's OK to imagine your name in lights as the genius researcher whose big breakthrough led to a revolutionary new mental health treatment, even though that's a bit like dreaming of being an astronaut one day . . .).

Notice that in this process you are engaging your mind and stimulating your curiosity once again. When our brains shut down and our eyes glaze over, research can be very boring to read. But a play mindset requires us to dive in, with pen, notebook, and highlighter in hand. These are our gardening tools as we dig and nurture the seed of curiosity in our God-soil. As you progress into later stages of researcher development, you can do this even when reading through paragraphs of statistics. Most of our students are surprised to find that they are able to engage the tougher sections

of an article by the end of the research course. The first time that light bulb goes off and you recognize a good value for Cronbach's alpha or a correlation coefficient, happiness sparks, and maybe even a little life satisfaction occurs.

Mental and physical health. The second domain of flourishing is mental and physical health. Perhaps this is analogous to the sunshine and rain needed for our research garden. Much of this self-care domain will happen outside the research classroom as you sip a cup of tea, hike in the woods, or spend time cultivating your relationship with God. These practices enhance our work as researchers because they stimulate our brains and get our creativity flowing. This morning I (Kristen) knew I was heading into a day of working on this book, and my time was going to be shorter than I wanted. Even with that sense of urgency, I decided to take a brief visit to a nearby lake to go kayaking (my favorite form of self-care). Paddling along gave me an opportunity to think about flourishing, which gave me energy and inspiration to sit and write. Had I come to the computer one hour earlier and skipped kayaking, finding each word and idea would have been an incoherent struggle.

We'll be talking about researching with your whole self in the next section of this chapter, but for now it's important to note that we flourish best as researchers when we treat our inner researcher—our curious self—as an integral part of ourselves rather than as a hat we take off when we leave our class assignments or research projects. When you are taking that walk on a sun-filled day, you are not just checking off a self-care box. You are taking your researcher-heart into a new experience during which you can *notice*. Perhaps take time to notice which flowers are in bloom or what the wind feels like moving across your face. Consider asking yourself why the road turns in a specific direction and how it met a specific need. A simple cup of tea might lead us to wonder where those

particular tea leaves were grown, how the plants are cultivated, and how tea has changed cultures over thousands of years. Who drank the first cup of tea, with whom, and what did this mean to them?

Other aspects of our mental and physical health must be nurtured to aid the process of research. It might sound obvious, but getting enough sleep, for example, enables our minds to stay awake and engaged when digging through a challenging article. Scheduling and time management are essential for getting our research tasks done without feeling frantic or rushed. We need to pace ourselves as researchers, taking one bite at a time and learning to chew slowly. If you look at the entire syllabus of your research course or think about all the work ahead of you for a dissertation, it's about as pleasant as shoving an entire steak into your mouth at once. You just can't chew it, no matter how juicy and tender it could have been one bite at a time. Bring yourself back to today: What is the one bite I can chew on and digest right now?

Any given project or study may take a lot longer than expected, or you may hit bumps along the way. At times, research can certainly feel like two steps forward and one step back. What coping strategies do you already use that might contribute to flourishing when the learning and research process doesn't feel easy? What stories will you tell about yourself as a researcher or the quality of your project? Internal messages such as *This is so tedious* or *No one will ever even read this anyway* discourage you, squash your inner researcher, and take you right back to research as work. If we are playing in the garden and feeding our souls with sunshine and water, we need to encourage ourselves with thoughts such as *This hard challenge is stretching me in some good directions* or *How might God be shaping and blessing me through this struggle?* Of course, a touchpoint back to your God-attachment is essential here as well. Sitting with him and sharing the

moments of joy and struggle allows him to care for you throughout the research process.

Meaning and purpose. Meaning and purpose, the third domain of flourishing, represent the fertilizer worked into the soil to allow our research garden to grow beyond what only water and sunshine can produce. The difference between fertilized and unfertilized soil is the balance of nutrients that can be absorbed by the plant's roots. When we lack meaning and purpose on our research journey, it is easy to wither and wilt. A famous book by Simon Sinek called *Find Your Why* gets at the idea that meaning drives purpose. Sinek's book echoes the biblical truth that we flounder without a solid sense of what we are about. We can set goals and take steps to achieve them, but if we lose sight of why we headed that direction in the first place, we are likely to give up.

Perhaps this moment is a good time in which to pause and ask why you are reading this book. Chances are you have enrolled in a research course, or perhaps you are further along in the researcher developmental process and wanted to reconnect with your sense of purpose. What is your purpose for engaging in research? Before you mentally respond with *Because I have to*, let's ask in a different way: What meaning can drive research in your life? What fruit will you be able to bear that is not currently available in your life? What *aha* moments might you experience that could lead you to a deeper love of God or dependence on him? What other purpose could the research process serve in your life, both now and in the long term?

So far our exploration of meaning-making and research has focused on you as an individual. What can *I* gain from the research process? We must also think collectively about the greater purposes of our work as researchers and hold this as a guide throughout the research process. Returning to Genesis 1, when God commanded humanity to "be fruitful and multiply," he also said, "Fill the earth

and subdue it” (Gen 1:28). Many dictionaries offer definitions of *subdue* that include “bring under control.” God spoke a direct purpose and authority over all humanity from the very beginning as part of our identity as his image-bearers. If bringing order to the world is an integral part of who we are, then how are we to do that in an ongoing way without continual assessment of our world? Research is the process by which we understand what is in the world. These insights lead to strategies for ordering and subduing the earth.

Thus, when you engage in research you are connecting with a larger, collective purpose that is God-given. You are responding to the call to operate from a position of authority. (A side note: it is interesting that when a researcher becomes an expert, they are often referred to as an *authority* on their subject.) Bringing us back to your individual part in that bigger picture, when you answer God’s call to research you can ask yourself, Where do I want to bring order to the world? Another way to explore your piece of the puzzle may be, What disorder in the world bothers me too much to let go of? The answers to these questions can be the start of your research agenda.

Character and virtue. Let’s move into our fourth domain, character and virtue. What does it mean to develop as a researcher who nurtures a heart of character and virtue? Certainly, we want to uphold ethical principles of research, and these are not to be taken lightly. Research ethics protect us from corruption, both of the data and of ourselves. We’ll explore these themes in more depth later. But the larger questions you must ask yourself are these: Who will I show myself to be as a researcher? As a counselor? Will the research questions I seek to explore and the way in which I conduct my research be driven by a character and virtue that reflects Christ?

Here we might imagine the Holy Spirit as the gardener in our research garden. He is a protector, a guide, a colaborer. As in

John 15, he prunes away the dead branches and serves as the source of life by which branches can grow. As we abide in the Spirit and he produces fruit in our lives, these changes will be seen in the contours of our research endeavors. Galatians 5 describes this garden fruit, highlighting the character and virtue of the Spirit. What crops are part of the Spirit's garden of shalom? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This list provides a bouquet of the character and virtues that lead to flourishing, so let's pause to consider each.

Where does love blossom in your researcher heart as you move in authority over the earth? What types of research questions might you ask with love at the core of your curiosity? If you undertook the research process, or even the research course itself, with joy, what would that look like? Perhaps the squeal of delight of a child who has discovered a new type of creature in his backyard? *Look at this new thing! Can I keep it??* Imagine the fullness of joy at the next classroom show-and-tell. Might a conference poster session match this bubbling-over experience?

Consider peace. Shalom itself. In *Embodying Integration*, Megan Anna Neff and Mark McMinn write, "Our primary work as counselors . . . is to relax into the peaceful posture of rest known only to those who are deeply loved."³ As counselor-researchers, peace is inherent to our posture toward the world. When we are comfortable in our own skin, rooted in a deep and secure attachment to God, we can enter the sacred space of helping others in a new way. We are not just keepers of peace but sharers. In much the same way, the peace-filled research process is one in which we are not seeking to posture or make a name for ourselves. We are deliberately and calmly moving through the work of exploration. We can

³Megan Anna Neff and Mark McMinn, *Embodying Integration: A Fresh Look at Christianity in the Therapy Room* (InterVarsity Press, 2020), 209.

follow one step and then another to see where the data lead us. Even when research deadlines loom or assignments are due, we have the opportunity through our rest in the Spirit to remain in a place of peace. This peace is not a feeling, although it may assist us in feeling calm. Rather, it is a posture gradually learned by those whose trust is actively in God. We return to him for our security. We are attached. As a result, it is in God's delight that we dwell as we engage in our research-play.

Research and patience go hand in hand. I (Kristen) remember when I first learned that a research study could take a year to conduct. I can now attest that from conception of an idea to publication in a journal, it is significantly longer than that. Each article you read was years in the making and took incredible patience in the heart of the researcher. (Not to mention this labor of love is typically unpaid.) What a testament to God's goodness and our formation by the Spirit when our research process is marked by peaceful, unhurried appreciation rather than the ideals of productivity. Rushing the research process leads to sloppy data and errors of all sorts. Ask the Spirit to grow your patience so it may help your research garden flourish.

What about the virtues of kindness and goodness? Do these accurately describe your way of being in life in general? As a researcher? What would it mean for kindness to envelop our engagement with members of our research teams or our participants? Might we find God himself expressed through us in these interactions? Are kindness and goodness byproducts of the results of our studies? When God saw his creation, he looked and said, "It is good." Does our research have such a depth of goodness that we can arrive at the end of a study and feel that same pride in our creation? Can we see that goodness as a reflection of God's image in us?

Next, imagine a life of faithfulness to the work of research, curiosity, and innovation set before you. Perhaps you sit at your retirement party and hear what others say about your life and the contributions you have made. Faithfulness as a lived virtue in the heart of the researcher empowers the commitment to see an exploration through to the end. It is a life of community rather than isolation, including mentoring and pouring into others. Faithfulness is a direct spiritual response to the calling God has placed on your life to explore and discover, to make meaning from what was unknown. Through the Spirit, the redeemed researcher has an opportunity to flourish in a life of faithful service to God and others.

Character and virtue were fully demonstrated by Jesus Christ in all these areas, but “gentle” is how he chooses to describe himself in Matthew 11:29. This description of his nature is included in his invitation into rest. To shalom. When the research brings weariness, the Spirit can minister to us in gentleness. We can align ourselves with him by agreeing with his gentleness for us. We do this by being gentle and compassionate as we still any inner voice of criticism or fear. In this way, we also practice self-control. In the mental health world, we might even conceptualize this as emotion regulation. As we exercise this virtue, we practice restraint and purposeful action in our research process. We step away for a time when we run into brick walls instead of barreling through. We pause. We listen. We hold tension. While the Spirit is at work forming our character and virtue for and through research, we flourish and become more expressive of our image of Christ.

Close social relationships. Now that we have taken time to smell the floral aroma of character and virtue, we arrive at the fifth domain of flourishing: close social relationships. Research is certainly not a solo sport. This reality was a challenge for me (Kristen) as I began my doctoral program. Over the course of my life, I had

learned that my projects were generally better accomplished when I did the work myself. I can recall in elementary school being placed into project groups with the kids who were not motivated or hard-working. The teachers saw me as a student who could bring these others along. While this might have provided opportunities for leadership development, it did not instill in me a love for getting projects done with others. It was harder to carry the weight of the whole group than just to do a project by myself. Fortunately, meeting peers such as Paul taught me that my research and work is now made better with the help and perspectives of others. This book is just one example of the ways in which my own ideas are too limited without input and companionship. Research teams can create something that is organically alive and moving—a living organism that cannot exist except in the interactions of a flourishing group.

Aside from the work of any given project, researchers need close social relationships with their fellow researchers for inspiration and growth. In our garden metaphor, this idea is akin to companion planting. When tomatoes and basil, for example, are planted in proximity to each other in the garden, both flourish more than if they had been planted apart. Your colleagues who are planted around you—perhaps classmates, professors, or fellow members of professional organizations—can fuel your curiosity and creativity in the research process if you attend to these relationships. Notice the word *close* here—we are not simply talking about acquaintances with whom you have brief, surface-level interactions. These relationships develop over time, moving from classmate relationships, at which point we and others such as Henry Cloud and John Townsend began, and developing into those of colleagues, collaborators, and lifelong friends.

To flourish as a researcher, you must invest in these peers. When they ask you to read their paper or article, take the time to do so

and offer genuine feedback. Get together monthly for check-ins on life and areas of curiosity. Repost the survey links of other researchers to help them along in the process of data collection. Share vulnerably about the challenges or doubts you have as a burgeoning researcher. Admit to your classmates (and your professor) when you don't understand part of an article. When working on a research team, share a reflexive journal in which you can write about your feelings and experiences in the research process. Take a look at the sidebar "Reflecting on the Research Process" for an example of a reflexive journal that we shared during a qualitative research project in our doctoral studies.

Reflecting on the Research Process

During our doctoral studies in 2019, we worked on a qualitative research project exploring how supervisors address values conflicts with counselors-in-training. Our team kept a reflexive journal, and here we share some of our entries with you, including one from our esteemed colleague Brian Fidler, PhD, LPC.

February 9—Kristen

What is a values conflict? For me, in the past it has felt issue-driven. My training in undergrad in integration (and really most of my comparison/contrast with biblical counseling) has felt very issue specific. I've changed a lot of my thinking over time on some issues. But what are the real value conflicts? Some of the issues . . . seem like issues until you are sitting across from a human being—it's not a debate but a person and a story. I've never had a values conflict in that moment. . . . Sitting in a session, what are the things that actually conflict with my Christian faith? I'll have to think more on that.

February 12—Paul

There is a tension for me in the overwhelming scope this project could have. I recognize a powerful bias or interpretive factor could be pushing for saturation and a theory when we do not have enough data because of the

fear that we will not find something substantive. I will need to reflect on this throughout the process and be held accountable through peer checking.

February 26—Kristen (after one participant interview was conducted prior to Human Subjects Review Committee approval)

We have a values conflict on our hands—seems fitting. Different members had different convictions about handling the HSRC process. I can see both sides—does it really matter? No. We'll get approved, and there is no actual difference between the before and the after. On the other side, in ethics, process matters. Considering yourself as the exception to the process is always dangerous. You don't know what you might not see. Also, what precedent are we setting as researchers? Imagine as a clinician if you started seeing clients before you had your intake paperwork established. Would you see someone without a consent to treatment in place? For how many sessions? That feels more risky than this situation, but what do I know about research and the risks we take on? (Not to mention that none of us are principal on this. . . . If I found out a student or supervisee took shortcuts on something with my name on it, I would be absolutely livid.)

We have the enthusiasm and the urge to drive forward with this research. We feel the time pressures. The process itself is flawed in the amount of time available versus the reality of scheduling interviews. How can we exercise patience in the midst of deadline pressures? How can we become better as researchers and as humans as a result of this values conflict?

What are some models that would help us resolve values conflicts as Christian researchers (individually and as a team)? Maybe we should be more directly open with [our professor] in person to tell him about what happened. Let him supervise us. See what he does. Be teachable in this moment.* The other thing is to notice the things within ourselves that make us squirm. Do I squirm about going outside the strict rules? Do I squirm about wasting time? What are my values, and what are they bumping into in this process? What is my reaction to my own inner squirm? Do I get mad, do I feel anxious, do I try to make everyone get along? I am big into team harmony, so my own squirm is people not getting along. I can go either way on the HSRC issue (although now that we have strict

instructions that seems like a fairly giant lie to proceed with). But I think we have to be open, honest, and together as a team.

*A side note: this is the course of action we took, and the participant interview was thrown out.

February 27—Brian

I love group dynamics. It's a thrill to me to rub shoulders with people who are more gifted, smarter, more dynamic than me. It brings to light some of my deepest insecurities regarding inadequacy and insufficiency, and forces me to address them in light of our process. I love the chance to grow.

My weakness, though, is to defer when perhaps I shouldn't. At times, I can easily think someone else's idea may be better than mine, or the reasons for their process should be explored rather than overrun by my own. . . . I am learning to be more comfortable in that discomfort and to even make space for it. We're going to be asking supervisors to wade around in that moment of tension and to engage it with us. Perhaps it's only fair that as researchers we are willing to wade into those waters ourselves, engage our own space. I'm grateful for our team that we can do that. And I appreciate that I am learning to trust—trust my teammates, trust the process, trust my intuition and expertise.

We would be remiss not to discuss the close social relationships that extend beyond your formal research colleagues. Certainly people with more close friendships flourish more than those who operate in isolation and loneliness. Since we are considering research as play rather than work, we might think of anyone with whom you have a close relationship as a fellow explorer. Within the confines of a research classroom or project, you operate on a research team and pursue answers to research questions via data collection and analysis. But your parents, siblings, spouse, children, family, and friends are just as much a part of your lifelong pursuit of what is true. As we have suggested, the heart of the researcher does not turn on and off when conducting research versus living your

personal life. Rather, your participation in the grand process of subduing the earth occurs every day in ordinary spaces with people who share your life. What quests have you shared with the people in your life? What order have you brought to God's creation with each other, and what areas of disorder might you hope to conquer next? To flourish with the heart of a researcher, you cannot go it alone.

RESEARCHING WITH YOUR WHOLE SELF

Now that we have built the foundation of how to flourish and live out this innate curiosity that God has given each of us, let's imagine what it might look like to integrate being a researcher into your identity. Could every part of you be fully activated and engaged so that you view yourself as an explorer on a mission? That unabashed kid in the sandbox? In Mark 12:30 Jesus tells us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, with every part of who we are. Later in John 14:15, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Regarding research, by bringing every part of ourselves to the process of ordering and subduing the earth, we are enacting a robust love for God and keeping his command to humanity.

There are many ways to talk about parts of self. Heart, soul, mind, strength, as we've just mentioned. We might also consider Sigmund Freud's id, ego, superego or Richard Schwartz's exiles, firefighters, managers, and core self.⁴ Marsha Linehan also gave us the concept of the "wise mind," in which our emotional and rational selves come together to help us make wise decisions.⁵ Here we will follow a biblical understanding of personhood but use some words from our psychological heritage to help express ourselves. We will

⁴Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. J. Strachey et al., vol. 19 (Hogarth, 1923); Richard C. Schwartz and Martha Sweezy, *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, 2nd ed. (Guilford, 2020).

⁵Marsha M. Linehan, *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder* (Guilford, 1993).

conceptualize our spiritual self (which we will refer to as the soul), our inner child, and our professional mind as they all work together to make up our researcher selves.

We begin with the soul, the seat of our identity, because whether we acknowledge this truth or not, we have been created as spiritual beings. Our identity is as *souled* persons. Sometimes we falsely dichotomize the spiritual and the physical, sawing ourselves in two as if we could shape-shift or turn off a switch. In the nature of our being, we are spiritually connected to an eternal and supernatural reality defined outside ourselves by our Creator God. Our whole being engages in the purposes of humanity, given to us by God, as we have already discussed, and the soul is what houses our researcher identity in an eternal kingdom. We live out a purpose that has ramifications far beyond what may be published in a journal. Our soul—our spiritual reality and identity—is fed by the Spirit. The Spirit anchors us, illuminating and growing the meaning/purpose and character/virtue domains of our flourishing.

As we acknowledge the centrality of our relationship with God, we invite you to attend to your relationship with him. You can follow the prayerful meditation shown in the sidebar “Drawing Close to God.” Mindfully and purposefully offer yourself to your source of love, curiosity, and knowledge. Pray and ask him directly about your piece in his command to order the world. Invite him to reveal to you what he might have for you in this season of life as a researcher. Keep a journal by your side and consider writing your prayer to God along with anything that occurs to you in response.

As you sit in self- and God-awareness, are there any parts of you that feel held back from God? Any parts of you that are critical to a researcher identity and practice that are guarded, doubtful, or anxious? Much like Schwartz’s exiles or Carl Jung’s inner child, these parts of ourselves are directly connected to the process of

research. Again, we invite you to revisit your childhood memories—what were your natural inclinations toward curiosity? What events chipped away at this curious play and made research turn into work? What happened that formed scared parts of you?

We recognize that every child is different. Some are more like daring inventors, and their curiosity leads them to try things. The Wright brothers, for example, were activating their inner-child selves when they first ran off the side of a sand dune in a homemade plane. Curiosity, trying and failing, innovating and building the world are what some of our inner children do. Others are more natural observers. Jane Goodall comes to mind, as her work in understanding the chimpanzee required a quietness of spirit that some researchers bring to the world. What type of child were you, and where does that show up for you now in your current developmental stage? Could that child be set free even in the midst of uncertainty or researcher impostor syndrome?

Finally, we consider our professional mind. Whether a student or graduate, if you are reading this book you have some connection to a desire to embark on a professional career as a counselor, helper, or researcher of some kind. This part of self might connect with Schwartz's managers, who keep all the ducks in a row and the outward appearance in check. However, engaging your professional mind in the work of research does not have to feel like an outworking of overresponsibility or posturing to appear impressive. Rather, your professional mind is the part of you that has developed all the way up to the adult self you are, ready to contribute to the world. It is akin to Linehan's wise mind in the sense that it balances both rational and emotional parts of you. In the helping professions, you regularly lean into emotions such as compassion and empathy. Research can tap into your rational, logical side and bring a greater balance to your professional expression and

sense of self. For me (Kristen), my doctoral studies did just that—developing in me a love of research that engaged my logical mind in a way that had been understimulated in my counseling career. Certainly, good counselors use both logic and emotion daily, but the mathematical and logical figuring out of the data can bring a new energy to the engaged professional mind.

RESEARCH AS RELATIONAL

Up to this point, we have invited you to lean into God, the purpose he has given you, and your curiosity. From here we are ready to invite you to consider bringing your whole self to the work of ordering the world through research-play. But we do not do this for ourselves, nor do we engage in this process for the process itself. All our efforts to develop our hearts as researchers are for the delight of giving ourselves to God in worship and into the service of others. Through research we honor the Father, imitate the Son, partner with the Spirit, and love our neighbors as ourselves. With this in mind we hope you see that research is a relational interaction of receiving from and giving back to God for the purpose of blessing others in his world.

Have you ever seen a child draw a picture for their parents? Chances are it isn't very good on an objective level. But parents are rarely objective, and when a child hands a new piece of artwork to their loving parents, they are generally thrilled and find a way to display it. As people ooh and ahh over that drawing, the beaming parents are honored. This experience is not just a feeling of pride but an actual honor bestowed on them. The child has given them a gift that brings honor to them as they share, "Look what our child has done!"

In a similar way, we honor God our Father when we explore the world and bring him our findings. "Look what I made, Dad!" When we hand God our data born out of curiosity and poured over with

all the parts of ourselves, he sees his own image in us. He sees the world he has made and the ways we have taken him up on his offer to tend the earth. Because he is God and not a human parent, he doesn't simply display our artwork for the world to see. Instead, he partners with us, allowing us to use our discoveries in conjunction with the Spirit to transform the world. With us, he changes lives through our innovative mental health interventions developed over years of research efforts. With us, he turns insight into new decision-making strategies and brings justice where oppression is uncovered. He returns honor by honoring.

As we participate in our Christian lives, we continually seek to imitate Jesus, the Son. With our whole researcher selves, we imitate Christ as we give ourselves to the mission of bringing order to the world. As he demonstrated, we can observe others and predict things from their behavior. As he did, we can act with timing and precision on a mission to conduct a true experiment. In John 5:19, Jesus says that the Son “can do . . . only what he sees the Father doing,” and we follow in an analogous way. What is the redemptive work that we see the Son doing? How might our research be a catalyst for healing? Even as we participate in shalom, with rest and play as our approach to research, how might we, like Jesus, attend to the needs in front of us and respond with compassion? Could that type of attentiveness and mission drive our research engagement?

In John 21, Jesus challenges Peter even as he forgives him for his triple betrayal. He asks, “Do you love me?” and upon hearing Peter's reassurance he commands, “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:15-17). After three years of following Jesus, from the initial call in John 1, Jesus again beckons to Peter, “Follow me!” (Jn 21:19). Notice the Son inviting you as you read these words: *Do you love me? Feed my sheep with all you explore in your research. Share your discoveries and knowledge with the church and the world. Follow me into places you do not yet understand.*

Find me in the spaces of inquiry, curiosity, and wonder. We pray that your researcher heart might respond to the Son with a resounding yes and amen. Or in the words of Isaiah, “Here I am! Send me” (Is 6:8).

Lest we strive to take on this calling in our own strength and ability, we remind you (and ourselves) that research is relational, and we partner with the Spirit as we work. Jesus tells his disciples in John 14:26 that he is sending his Spirit, the Advocate, who will teach us all things. Whether we are on a Christian journey or not, it is the Spirit who leads humanity into all truth and brings order into the world through our research. As Christians, we acknowledge and lean into this partnership, humbly aware that God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts and his ways higher than our ways (Is 55:8-9). In the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:16, “Who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” We certainly cannot reveal anything in our research that God himself does not already know. In fact, through the Spirit poured out on us by Christ, we come to know higher thoughts than we can achieve on our own.

How do we acknowledge the work of the Spirit even as we begin to form a research question? Might it be that some major discoveries display the rumblings of the Spirit in the mind and heart of the unwitting scientist? Could it be that the burden on your heart—the area where you simply *must* bring order to the world—came directly from the Spirit of God? Perhaps that finding that showed up in your study, delivered through the labor of your surrendered whole self, was birthed by the hands of the Spirit. He has invited us into partnership, albeit an unequal one, in which he offers mutual respect and love where it is undeserved. He *allows* us to be researchers and to share *his* truth with the world as if we ourselves had the brilliance to discern it. And all the while he delights in it. He delights in you and all the things you want to know.

Through our acts of honoring the Father, imitating the Son, and partnering with the Spirit in our research, we also love our neighbors as ourselves. Research makes a genuine contribution to the world, enlightening neighbors we may never meet. When we consume research, we are blessed by the gifts of others who have gone before and left insights in their articles we read, a plate of cookies on our doorstep when we move into the research neighborhood. I (Kristen) remember the feeling of honor when I was cited for the first time in another author's research study. It was exciting to realize that people I did not know found my work, cited it, and built on ideas within my study. Of course, they had many citations of many researchers. We as researchers become a part of the research community (sometimes collectively called "the literature"). Just as we have received from researchers before us, we now are able to give. My research continues to ripple out in ways known and unknown to me.

Fortunately, the research well is deep, and there is plenty of room for more neighbors. There is no end to the things we will want to know. There will always be more studies to be done. In fact, sometimes research leaves us with far more questions than it answers. Once we uncover the first piece of the puzzle, we find five more hiding. God has sent us on a global scavenger hunt, and when we obtain the answer to one clue, it helps us collectively to share it with each other. So allow us to be your formal invitation into the relationship of the researcher community through the invitation of Mr. Rogers, "Won't you be my neighbor?"

CONCLUSION

We conclude this chapter by returning to curiosity and posing this question: What do you want to know? When the disciples began to follow Jesus, we are told in John 1:38 that he turned and

asked them, “What are you seeking?” In a different way, we ask you the same. So, what are you seeking? How will you respond to the invitation we have presented in this chapter to give your whole self to the research process? Are you seeking answers to research questions? Or a greater knowledge of the depths of God himself? Or perhaps a combination? Maybe, before you can ask questions, you are in need of healing in an area of your heart that has become deadened to natural curiosity. If you resonate with this, we encourage you to ask and pursue Jesus for this healing and restoration.

We encourage you to take a look at the exercise in the sidebar “What Are You Seeking?” Whether you intend to be a good consumer of research as a clinician or a producer of research at a doctoral level, this exercise can help you identify your research agenda in light of all we have discussed in this chapter. We hope that working your way through this chapter has ignited a spark of imagination or inspiration. You have permission to daydream and wonder, to ask dumb questions (no such thing!), and to innovate. We look forward to citing your work someday.

What Are You Seeking?

In a notebook or journal, take time to explore these writing prompts to connect with your researcher heart and begin to identify the direction of your research interests. These prompts can also prepare you to engage in the classroom discussion questions provided at the end of this chapter.

1. What are three things I have been curious about or areas of disorder in the world that have bothered me across multiple stages of my life?
2. What are the ways I naturally relate to God? How can I use these ways of relating as I engage in reading and producing research?
3. Of the five domains of human flourishing (happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose,

character and virtue, and close social relationships), which ones stand out most to me as things I need in my life? What steps can I take to flourish as a researcher?

4. When considering the spiritual core, the inner child, and the professional mind, how do I see these pieces of myself working together? Is there any competition or conflict between them?
5. What types of articles excite me when I read the titles and abstracts? List five titles from a library database search that sound interesting.
6. If I imagine contributing to the world and loving God and my neighbor through research, what would I want my contribution to be?
7. Do I see research as a quest to discover truth that exists or as a process of creating meaning and new truths?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What childhood memories connect you with the concept of innate curiosity? What are some events or experiences in your life that contributed to a squelching of curiosity?
2. Which parts of yourself do you most easily bring into this research class? Which parts are most hesitant?
3. In which areas of your life are you currently flourishing? What did it take to arrive at that place? What skills or traits do you bring to this course that could help you flourish as you learn?
4. How does research fulfill the command to love God and love your neighbor as yourself? How might that affect the way you approach this course?
5. Consider the word *innovation*. If you were to create a new and innovative mental health intervention, what steps would be a part of that process? How would research play a role? What parts of self would be activated in that process?

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Watch “The Power of Wonder,” a TEDx Wall Street talk by Jeff Hoffman.⁶ Each student can individually brainstorm a list of five things unrelated to psychology or counseling that they are curious about and five things related to psychology or counseling they are curious about. Compare lists as a class and begin to group students around shared topics of interest.
2. Collect random objects from home or around the office and distribute one to each student. Have them study the object for two minutes and write down everything they notice. Once the two minutes are over, instruct them to do it again for another two minutes. Repeat for a third two-minute interval. Discuss as a class what that process was like and how their third observation period differed from their first one.⁷

⁶“The Power of Wonder: Jeff Hoffman at TEDxWallStreet,” TedX Talks, YouTube, April 12, 2012, 11:30, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcV4RXC-V94.

⁷This exercise connects to a well-known story called “Agassiz and the Fish,” described in an article from the Gospel Coalition, among other sources. Justin Taylor, “Agassiz and the Fish,” Gospel Coalition, November 16, 2008, www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/agassiz-and-the-fish/.

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