

# Developing Kingdom Professionals through International Service-Learning Experiences

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## **Abstract**

This article explores students' perceptions of academic learning, spiritual growth, and Kingdom impact from serving in an international context. Previous research demonstrates the importance of reflection in promoting learning, personal development, and connecting with the service context in international service-learning courses. However, there is little research on faith-based reflective models to facilitate the integration of faith, learning, and service in international service-learning experiences in Christian college courses. This study examines whether educators in Christian Colleges and Universities can use White and Jacob's (2016; 2017) Kingdom Professional Model as a reflective tool to promote the integration of faith, learning, and service after an international service-learning experience. Participants in the study included students from a global practicum in Malawi, Africa, who had served with a faith-based organization that provided health education to impoverished communities. Participants attended a debriefing session after returning from Malawi. The debriefing experience using the Kingdom Professional Model facilitated deep connections between their service and their understanding of educational content and spiritual growth, concluding that their experiences of faith, learning, and service were closely interrelated. They highlighted differences between this experience and traditional mission trips, lessons related to faith; what they learned about the social work discipline; how they grew personally; and the faculty member's role in facilitating integration. The article proposes an extension of the model to promote the integration of faith, learning, and service and concludes with lessons and considerations for educators interested in using the model as a reflective tool.

**Key words:** faith integration; international service-learning; Kingdom Professional Model; social work

## **Introduction**

Research has repeatedly confirmed that service-learning is an effective practice that allows students to learn and apply disciplinary content to benefit community partners. This confirmation extends to international service-learning, which "combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context" (Crabtree, 2008, p. 18). However, the literature offers little research on reflective models to promote the integration of faith, learning, and service. Educators at Christian Colleges and Universities need reflective tools to facilitate the integration of faith, learning, and service in Christian courses because integrating these constructs is essential to fulfilling Christian institutional missions. This study uses White and Jacob's (2016, 2017) Kingdom Professional Model to debrief experiences of faith, learning, and service in a cross-cultural context to illustrate how students can integrate these domains. The article offers lessons for educators, proposes an extension of the model to promote the integration of

faith, learning, and service, and offers considerations for faculty interested in using the model as a reflective tool.

## **Literature Review**

The international service-learning literature typically examines projects from the perspectives of learning, personal development, or the service context. However, the literature provides little practical research on reflective tools to facilitate the integration of faith, learning, and service for educators to use in courses at Christian Colleges and Universities. This literature review draws from sources within the service-learning literature (which includes international service-learning) in faith-based, private, and public programs. The service-learning literature includes commonly cited theories that are also applicable outside of service-learning research.

One of the challenges in describing constructs from an integrative perspective is organizing the discussion so that one understands the pieces that comprise an experience. At the same time, deconstructing the components creates an artificial division between the constructs that may not exist

in reality. This review will present international service-learning experiences through three reflective lenses: learning, faith, and service in the global context. Even

though this review will discuss these constructs separately, the author contends that these lenses overlap, which is why it is essential to view these experiences from an integrative perspective. This discussion will culminate by introducing The Kingdom Professional Model (2016; 2017) as an integrative lens to view international service-learning programs. This model is the reflective tool for this study.

### Exploring Learning in Service-Learning Programs

The earliest literature on service-learning focused solely on demonstrating the value of service-learning experiences to student learning. Eyler and Giles' (1999) authoritative volume on the significance of service-learning as a pedagogy that promotes learning through activities that benefit the community is one of the first points of reference for educators seeking to understand the role that academic learning plays in the context of service-learning experiences. According to Eyler and Giles (1999), service-learning focuses on educational outcomes and the service experiences that lead to these outcomes. The link between the outcomes and service is reflection.

Kolb's (1984; 2014) experiential learning theory and Mezirow's (1991, 1997) transformational learning theory also hinge upon the role of reflection in promoting learning in such programs as international service-learning experiences; however, their models extend the focus on learning beyond student outcomes. Kolb's (1984; 2014) model focuses on the cognitive process for learning to occur. Kolb's (1984; 2014) experiential learning theory presents a cycle that includes concrete experiences, reflective exercises, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation to promote cognitive learning. For Kolb, learning happens when an individual can reflect upon experiences so that the learner can conceptualize an idea in a new context. In Mezirow's (1991, 1997) model, the focus is on affective learning. Mezirow's (1991, 1997) transformational learning theory incorporates reflection to challenge learners to take a deeper dive into what they are experiencing, how they are processing the experience, and why they are processing the experience in that particular way. This reflective process challenges the "assumptions by which we understand our experiences" and evokes emotions that need to be addressed and resolved for affective learning to occur (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5).

Kieley (2005) incorporated both Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and Mezirow's (1991, 1997) transformational learning theory in a study of international service-learning. Unlike Kolb, who focused on individual learning, Kieley's research contextualizes learning within a community. Unlike Mezirow, who stressed the importance

of resolving emotions for learning to occur, Kieley's findings revealed that the feelings evoked through intense dissonance promote transformational learning. This finding is consistent with Adler's (1975) claim that the "problems and frustrations in the culture shock process" can provide a foundation for "higher levels of personality development" (p. 14). Furthermore, Kieley noted that learning happens in a community when students process problems through the interpersonal connections made in the international service-learning experience. He also highlighted the need "to structure opportunities for dialogue that surface diverse perspectives" (Kieley, 2005, p. 17). These works lay the foundation to present learning as the first critical lens in a reflective tool with international service-learning programs.

### Faith Development

In addition to looking at learning in international service-learning programs, other literature considers these experiences' impact on faith development. Radecke (2007) applied James Fowler's (1981) and Sharon Daloz Parks' (1986) theories of faith development in a study of students' perceptions of the role that international service-learning experiences had upon their spiritual growth and faith formation. Like Fowler and Parks, Radecke (2007) found that significant experiences shaped students' faith. He noted the paradox students experienced between the impoverished conditions of the service context, the sense of tranquility and joy, and the people's willingness to share what little they had that the students found attractive. Students in Radecke's (2007) study also described the significance of the people's integration of active religious faith into their everyday lives as particularly transformational. As Parks (1986) theorized, students in Radecke's study noted that these experiences prompted them to think about their faith commitments and beliefs and the steps they wanted to continue to take to grow closer to God.

The after-service reflection is also critical for looking at the experiences' impact on faith development. Students in Radecke's (2007) study reflected upon their vocational calls and envisioned their impact locally and globally, adding to the perspective through which students can view international service-learning experiences. Jones et al. (2012) likewise cited the importance of reflection in creating opportunities to reframe experiences in such a way that allows students to make meaning of the experience considering their sense of purpose and career goals. Helm-Stevens, Kiple, and Pfeifer (2018) also noted the importance of student reflection upon their experiences of faith to promote faith development and encourage engagement in future service opportunities. Faith is the second essential lens in a reflective tool with international service-learning experiences.

## Service

In addition to demonstrating international service-learning programs' impact on student learning and faith development, the literature highlights ways in which students have reflected on their service considering the service context. The service context includes the place, the people, and the structures that shape students' service. To reflect upon service, students must first consider the place where they served. Singleton (2015) made the case that "the context of place provides a framework of authentic experience for deeper reflection (Singleton, 2015, p. 1).

Students may remember the people in a service context as service recipients or collaborators from whom they learned. Gregory et al. (2021) noted that the most effective programs allow for interpersonal connections between people that promote reciprocal learning, which means students and community partners learn from one another rather than having the students come in as the experts meeting an immediate need. Crabtree (2013) also highlighted the need for

"opportunities for community members to reflect with students" to "engage questions of intended and unintended outcomes" of service (p. 21). When students encounter structural issues, they may confront their biases as they face challenges within systems. Matthew et al. (2018) noted that structural issues within systems also challenge students to develop cultural humility as they learn how to work to promote change from community members. Learning and the meaning students assign to their service are "solidified by intentional debriefing and reflecting on daily experiences," serving alongside community partners in the service context (Matthew et al., 2018, p. 36). These contributions to the literature demonstrate the role of the place, people, and structural issues that make up the service context and shape how students view their service. Thus, service, as experienced in the service context, provides the third reflective lens for international service-learning projects.

## A Practical Tool

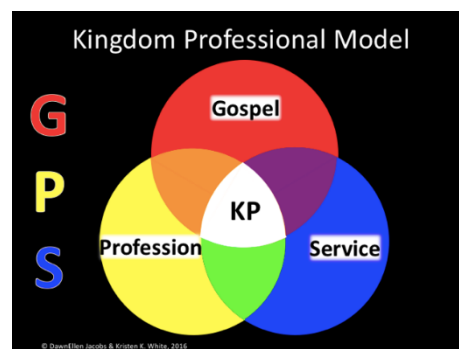
Although it is essential to understand the impact of reflecting upon international service-learning experiences through the lenses of learning, faith, and service, educators need a reflective tool to facilitate the *integration* of these domains. The author chose White and Jacobs' (2016; 2017) Kingdom Professional Model as a reflective tool because White and Jacobs developed it after seven years of leading, debriefing, and reflecting upon international service projects with student and faculty teams. White and Jacobs were especially interested in conceptualizing the integration of faith, learning, and service that they believed emerged from these experiences.

Their work to develop the model culminated during White's (2016) dissertation research on faculty leading these experiences and is based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory.

White and Jacobs (2016; 2017) designed the Kingdom Professional Model for Christian educators to grow toward full integration, where all domains come together, and one can develop into a Kingdom Professional. White (2016) defined a Kingdom Professional as "a Christian educator who integrates his or her three identities- an academic, a servant, and a faith-follower- into a holistic identity and engages the world to advance God's kingdom" (K. White, 2016, p. 2). The authors conceptualized the model by applying the terms Gospel, Profession, and Service to represent faith, learning, and living domains (see Figure 1). Faith is a reflection of one's worldview, which for the Christian includes the gospel. Learning indicates mastery of the academic discipline and the associated professional skillset. Living reveals itself through service in the global (local and international) context. Different colors represent faith/gospel (red), learning/profession (yellow), and living/service (blue) domains, and a spectrum of colors represents the overlap of the areas. Perfect integration occurs in the white zone, where all the colors come together to form the Kingdom Professional (K. White, 2016).

White (2016) posited that faculty at many Christian universities either live in the orange zone, practicing integrating faith and learning, or in the green area, where they host service-learning programs that incorporate academic content and service. However, one must fully integrate all three domains for a Kingdom Professional to emerge. White and Jacobs presented the Kingdom Professional Model in 2017 based on interviews from White's dissertation (K. K. White, 2016). This model is the reflective tool for this study.

**Figure 1:** Kingdom Professional Model



Permission to Use (White, 2022)

## Context and Methodology for the Study

The literature lays essential groundwork for understanding student learning and faith experiences while serving in an

international context. The Kingdom Professional Model is a tool to reflect upon these experiences by providing a lens that integrates faith, learning, and service. The following discussion presents the study's context and methodology.

### **Institutional Context**

California Baptist University's (CBU) mission is "to help students understand and engage in their (created) purpose by providing a Christ-centered educational experience that integrates academics with spiritual and social development opportunities" ("Mission: What is CBU's Purpose?" 2022). Since CBU is a Baptist institution, it has maintained a commitment to the Great Commission by welcoming students from all faith backgrounds. As a result, a significant number of students are not Christians. At the same time, CBU's commitment to the Great Commission is also evident in faculty, staff, and student involvement in international service.

In 1997 California Baptist University launched International Service Projects, a discipleship and mission-oriented program for students, staff, and faculty to participate in service-oriented projects in partnership with the International Mission Board and churches overseas. These programs reflected traditional missional activities set in a global context. As faculty became more involved, they began considering how they might apply their discipline to these programs that focus on missions. Around this time, a parallel emphasis started in the College of Allied Health. The dean was passionate about developing academically driven programs that would prepare students to apply their academic discipline globally. This dean had the vision to see mission opportunities emerge from teaching students to live out their faith where they practiced their academic fields. Finally, in 2017, community and global engagement became a priority within academic affairs at CBU. As a result, the faculty developed academic engagement programs for students to serve in local and international contexts. As faculty began leading these programs, a colleague introduced White and Jacob's (2016; 2017) Kingdom Professional Model as a model for faculty to consider as they planned their programs. Faculty also began asking about ways to debrief international service-learning experiences. The program director for social work was eager to see how the model could facilitate reflection with students who participated in a global social work practicum.

### **Context for the Project**

To understand the nature of this project, the reader needs to understand the difference between issues that drive social work practice in the United States and Malawi. In the United States, social work has a long history of addressing questions related to child welfare, homelessness, and other matters related to health and well-being. In Malawi, the setting for this project, social work has been a recognized

discipline for fewer than ten years. Social workers must address more fundamental issues impacting survival, like managing infectious diseases, getting clean water, using renewable substances to build shelters, and providing access to electricity. This project aimed to help students experience social work practice in a third-world setting. The faculty wanted the students to see what it meant for the needs of a village, rather than the discipline, to dictate social work practice. They also wanted CBU's master's degree students to interact with Malawian bachelor's degree students who hungered to learn because they wanted to impact their villages.

To accomplish these goals, the students journeyed to the interior of Malawi to understand what social work means there. They explored how to mediate conflicts between immediate individual needs and long-term corporate needs. They went to villages and observed residents perform the destigmatizing work of sharing how they took their medicine to control their HIV. They witnessed many uses of water bottles as renewable products that villagers could use for everything from containers for water to take their medicine, watering their vegetables, building homes, and creating built-in air conditioning systems. The faculty believed each experience would be transformative for students as they learned to view faith, learning, and service through this cultural context.

### **Methodology**

A few months after the project ended, six of the nine students who participated in the international service-learning project volunteered to participate in this study through a debriefing exercise to process the lessons they had learned from their global practicum. All participants were female Master of Social Work students in the second year of their program. The researcher did not ask students about their faith backgrounds but knew that students had experiences with faculty in the social work program that would prepare them to discuss questions related to the Christian faith.

After securing informed consent to participate in the study, the researcher gave the participants a four-page handout and asked them to reflect on the various domains of their experience: academic, service, and faith (see the Appendix for the handout). The packet pictures three circles representing each of the realms: yellow (academic), blue (service), and red (faith). In the academic domain, the researcher asked students to describe an educational component of their experience and explain what they learned about social work. For the service domain, students identified an experience in Malawi and explained what they learned about social work practice from serving in this context. In the faith domain, students reflected on lessons about their faith, God, and any perceived Kingdom impact.

Finally, the researcher asked the students to consider each domain's significance and points of overlap between the areas. The researcher instructed the students to illustrate the domains' significance by each circle's size relative to the other areas. For example, if faith was not a personally significant component of the experience, it might be smaller than the other circles. If the academic discipline was a dominant component of the experience, it might be larger than the other circles. Points of overlap could include the following: times when conversations about their faith helped them see social work in a new light (orange); the service experience raised questions about faith (purple); students applied lessons learned in the classroom in the service context (green), or questions of faith intersected with the academic discipline and service context (white). After students had the opportunity to reflect upon their experience individually, they discussed their answers and drew a single diagram that included their collective perspectives of the experience. The students discussed points of overlap relative to their experience. At the end of the session, the students volunteered additional takeaways to summarize the global practicum. These conclusions highlighted the meaning the students assigned to the experience relative to the debriefing exercise. The reflective exercise was two hours long. The students processed the meaning that they gave to their experience for an additional half-hour.

The researcher recorded the reflective activity, transcribed the data, reviewed the handouts, and grouped the responses according to points of overlap between learning, faith, and service. The author then sent the transcript to a colleague familiar with the Kingdom Professional Model to see if she recognized elements from the students' responses that reflected the model and where the students pointed out the overlap of the domains.

The colleague's confirmation of the places of overlap between the students' responses and the learning, faith, and service constructs validated the use of the model as a reflective tool. This validation laid the groundwork for highlighting the half-hour discussion following the reflective activity as the place where the integration of faith, learning, and service crystallized for the students. The following discussion will summarize the student responses in light of the reflective activity. Then, the findings will focus on the students' conclusions about their practicum in the half-hour discussion following the exercise and describe lessons from the program considering their experiences integrating faith, learning, and service.

### **Responses from the Reflective Activity**

The reflective exercise provided the foundation for the integration because it gave students multiple lenses to view their international service-learning experience. Each point

of the discussion added new layers for the students to explore. When they completed their individual diagrams, the students drew slightly different pictures to represent their experiences in Malawi. Four of the six students drew circles representing the academic, faith, and service domains that were equal in size with similar points of overlap. One student drew a diagram where a large "academic" circle encapsulated overlapping "service" and "faith" circles. The last student drew two large "service" and "faith" circles with a large overlapping section and a small "academic" circle with small points of overlap between the shapes. When the students drew the group diagram, the three circles were about the same size, with places of overlap between each of the three circles and a single point of overlap in the center.

After the students drew the group diagram, they began concentrating on the points of overlap by identifying scenarios that they felt represented an overlap of the different aspects of their experience. In referring to the place on their diagram where academics and service overlapped, students described being able to translate what they had learned to practice in the cross-cultural setting along with lessons from the community. When they mentioned the points where their faith intersected with the service context, they primarily discussed the personal struggles and points of inspiration from the people modeling love for another, joy, and gratitude. When faith, service, and academics crossed, they again referenced the faith challenges and points of inspiration, lessons they had learned working with the community, and how they were encouraged professionally. Following the reflective activity, the students offered important takeaways about the distinctive of the global practicum. The students' conclusions during this debriefing experience captured the meaning that the students assigned to their international practicum after viewing it through overlapping lenses of faith, learning, and service. The following discussion will flesh out the students' conclusions about their practicum experience following the reflective activity.

### **Findings: Student Conclusions Following the Reflective Activity**

The students described the lessons they learned from their practicum in ways that reflected the integrative nature of the Kingdom Professional Model. After constructing their diagram that mirrored the Kingdom Professional Model, the students conceptualized their global practicum as an integrative experience. The following discussion will capture the students' reflections considering the integrative experience because they credited the program for changing their understanding of social work, faith, and service in a global context. In the literature review, the challenge was to describe separate constructs that may overlap in reality.

The challenge in explaining students' conclusions from an integrative perspective is that each lesson may not focus on all domains equally. However, the takeaways collectively demonstrate the students' integration of faith, learning, and service because they experienced the lessons concurrently.

When the students reflected upon the project's entirety, they noted five key conclusions: First, they contrasted the integrative experience with traditional mission projects. Second, they referenced how serving in this cultural context stretched their faith. Third, they recalled essential lessons about the practice of social work that they learned. Fourth, they highlighted ways the integrative experience had personally changed them. Finally, they credited the faculty member for the role he played in helping them integrate faith, learning, and service.

### **The Contrast between Integrative Experiences and the Traditional Mission Project**

When the students summarized the experience, they noted components that distinguished their international service-learning program from traditional mission projects. The integrative program differed in three significant ways: First, the experience allowed them to see the relevance of the three domains to their learning. Second, the interactions the students had allowed them to see the importance of a fellow member of a community making long-term investments over an outsider providing a short-term intervention. Finally, the practicum helped students see their academic discipline's practical role in transforming communities.

A key value the students expressed was the opportunity to connect their faith with learning and service in a cultural context. They said integrating their faith, learning, and service helped them maximize their learning as they understood the relevance of the domains to their experience. As one participant, Shaunte, explained,

Education served as the foundation for this experience. Being in Malawi allowed for the practical application of the theories and modalities of therapeutic practices I learned during the MSW at CBU, but it all goes together. Without that education, nothing would have clicked, but to see my faith and to see their faith, as (faith) is described in the bible, changed me. Having an academic program made such a difference because we went as learners and collaborators; when I went on mission trips, we did not go with the same perspective. Students also communicated a critical value that differentiated the integrated experience from a traditional mission experience: long-term investments in the life of a community take priority over outsiders meeting immediate short-term needs. Shaunte recalled, "When we went to the HIV village, one of the ladies said, 'I'm so grateful you guys are here because it means - we can eat today.' It was humbling." At that moment, she understood

that the short-term benefit of food for a day fell short of the answers that investing in a nonprofit within a community could do because "they know where their need is" (Shaunte). Victoria referenced working collaboratively when the community wanted them as "outsiders" to solve their problems. She appreciated the opportunity to help them understand their abilities and work together to better themselves and their community. She expressed a powerful lesson that she wanted to take into her practice, "I learned how to be inclusive and not (be) so quick to give solutions because, as social workers, our clients know best. Our job is to be alongside them as they navigate their thoughts. They have the solutions" (Victoria). These experiences reinforced the priority of social work to make a

long-term investment in communities over outsiders meeting immediate short-term needs, which is more common with traditional mission experiences.

A third important distinctive of the academic engagement experience from traditional mission projects concerns the lessons students learned in the classroom to equip them with the skills they needed to serve in the field. The students referenced learning that the purpose of social work is to make a practical impact in people's lives and appreciated the opportunity to practice what they learned to benefit others. Maria reflected upon the chance to practice needs assessments with HIV-infected outcasts. She was excited to see the integration between course content and her service in the field: "We engaged them; we got to know them; we did a needs assessment, which is the integration of academics" in the service context (Maria). This practical impact also provided a new understanding of what it meant for students to live out their faith. Amanda explained,

I think my experience in the area of faith was not necessarily that I spoke about the Kingdom of God, but mostly to show love to everyone...I think it was both ways. I experienced their love towards us, (and) I experienced the love and grace of God in my life.

By integrating faith, learning, and service, these students gained a glimpse of the practical ways believers can demonstrate God's love through their professions, which is distinct from traditional mission experiences.

### **The Integrative Experience and Faith Lessons**

Faith lessons consistently provided opportunities for challenge and a new understanding of old lessons. Such was the case with lessons about God and their faith that the students learned from their practicum experience. When students spoke about their faith considering the integrative experience, they referenced faith-stretching encounters and the opportunities to understand biblical principles they had grown up hearing from a new perspective.

Integration of these three domains introduced dissonance

for students; they processed challenges in the field considering their role as social workers, what they believed about God, and how He works in the world. As students reflected upon their faith, they referenced the tensions they experienced that stretched their faith and understanding of who God is. Shaunte recalled being angry with God because of the lack of resources.

I was like, 'Your Word says that you love your children. How is this entire country without the basics?...you know, I see them from the perspective of coming from America, where I have grocery stores, we have disposable food, and they don't even have a refrigerator...As an American that grew up in a house with food and clothes, I struggled with how and why God would allow children in Malawi to experience starvation, death, and disease (at an exponential) rate. As I prayed, God allowed me to see his love for those in Malawi.

It was not only the contrast with life in the United States that challenged students' faith in light of their home culture mindset. Rosa noted that Malawi initially reminded her of Mexico when they drove through villages with kids running and screaming for water bottles. However, she soon realized that the depth of poverty she was about to encounter was more profound than she could conceptualize.

At first, I was like, 'I get why they want water bottles and stuff,' but it wasn't until later that I realized they were screaming for empty water bottles. And so, I had to learn that although they had wells built, they didn't have containers to take them to school or anything. So, they're going without water...Personally, I didn't know how to process it (Rosa).

As students wrestled with the questions that integration raised, they also experienced biblical principles in a new light. One student was transformed by how she saw people relate within their village and how they responded to their meager resources. The villagers demonstrated gratitude, joy, and understanding of loving one's neighbor. Shaunte commented, "Despite what I perceive as 'a lack of,' they perceive it as a blessing." In the words of one of the villagers with HIV, 'God blessed us today with food.' Food for them was a piece of bread and soda." Ana commented,

The level of love that was shared within conversations, activities, or meals was unparalleled to anything I've ever experienced. I truly felt abundant joy and love for God in the songs and dances we heard from people far less fortunate than us. The experience provided the students with opportunities to see these biblical principles lived out in a way they had never experienced before.

### **The Integrative Experience and Lessons Learned about the Discipline**

In addition to faith lessons, reflection on the experience from an integrative perspective helped students connect

their experience with lessons learned in the social work discipline. The students could apply essential lessons for social workers related to cultural competency and participation in destigmatizing work in a new cultural context. When looking at cultural competency, the students noted the contrast of serving in a culture that is rooted in community from their American perspective,

When I hear service from an American perspective, I'm like, "Oh, what can I do for you?" But it's not what I can do for you; it's how can I help invest in you so that you can help with your community... I realized that we are not coming here to "fix" issues, but to empower the community" (Rosa).

As social workers, they needed to learn to lay down their desires to produce results and empower the community to make needed changes. Regarding participating in destigmatizing work, the students referenced the educational programs the residents who had received HIV treatment put together for the community. The residents put together skits to show how HIV spreads and the importance of taking medication. The students explained that these performances reduced fear of the stigma of letting others know they had HIV. "I loved that [they] didn't need a formal education. [Their skits] destigmatized and normalized the experience [of taking medicine for HIV]" (Shaunte). These encounters incarnated essential concepts taught in the classroom about the destigmatizing work that partnering with the community members creates to bring healing to whole regions.

### **The Integrative Experience and Personal Growth**

When students spoke about their experience integrating faith, learning, and service, they reflected upon their personal growth in two specific areas. First, their time in Malawi prompted the students to change their thinking about themselves and how they relate to the world. Second, the integrative practicum affirmed their calls as social workers and pointed them to consider new areas within the field. The students cited these areas of growth as transformative.

These opportunities to integrate faith, learning, and service propelled students to consider personal changes they needed to make to their ways of thinking. The students attributed the villager's model of joy, gratitude, and loving one's neighbor despite discrimination and extreme poverty to encouraging them to seek opportunities to grow in joy, gratitude, and the conviction to love one's neighbor and to be more grateful and welcoming to other people. Rosa realized that she had to challenge some biases that she had. She recognized that she had to change her perspective. "Going [to Malawi] tested my faith to understand that there was a reason I was there, to change my viewpoint...I left there more open-minded" (Rosa). Victoria recalled a sign she saw in the Malawian school "Change your mindset." This

sign was pivotal for this student "It taught me that no matter what I'm going through, I can change my mindset. I could focus on what this is teaching me. I can see the difference in my attitude." One student summarized the challenge to their way of thinking well, "God gives us a reason, and [He] gives us a choice. It's up to us whether to take it or not... if I'm going to step on somebody else to get to a higher level or whether [I will] listen and love thy neighbor or not" (Maria). The students clearly expressed the transformative work of integrating faith, learning, and service to change their thinking.

In addition to transforming minds, this integrative experience provided affirmations related to students' vocational calls as social workers. Rosa's exposure to the lack of resources helped her realize the population where she felt called to work. "I came back and processed my experience, (and) I realized God brought me to Malawi for a reason" (Rosa). This student believed her time in Malawi solidified her call to work with children. Other students reflected upon how the practicum expanded their opportunities for influence, even if it meant overcoming fears. Victoria expressed that fear had held her back, and now, she wanted to give her everything and broaden her perspective. She had always resisted the clinical side of social work because working within the community gave her more opportunities to work on immediate solutions. Her time in Malawi helped her see the role of therapy in the life of a community. "My faith also came in [where] I have been struggling for years, [saying] 'I don't want to do [therapy,] no, no, no, never, never- but now I see how important it is, and God is telling me like, 'You're really good at this [therapy]'" (Victoria). For these students, the experiences taught them to live beyond the limits they had put upon themselves to consider all the possibilities for their influence as social workers.

### **The Role of the Faculty in Integrative Experiences**

A key finding that the Kingdom Professional Model does not capture is the faculty member's role in facilitating integration. The students credited their professor for teaching them to integrate faith, learning, and service by encouraging them to immerse themselves among the people in the villages and with the Malawian students. Maria noted how he directed them, "We were on this stage, and [our professor] said, 'No, we're not going to be on a stage because we're no better than them... We're going to incorporate ourselves and immerse ourselves among them. He also facilitated their ability to integrate faith, learning, and service by intentionally using transition times as opportunities for students to debrief their experiences. Students noted the significance of bus rides and dinners to process their experiences and pray together. The students mentioned how much they learned in the debriefing process because they could talk about their experiences in light of

academic content and questions of faith, they were processing. "We were able to debrief real events that we experienced in real-time" (Maria). Shaunte summarized the role that debriefing played in their experiences.

One of the most important things was that we debriefed every day. We talked about what we did, who we were with, and prayed. All of the experiences were processed in debriefing. We talked about faith, academics, and service. It was essential.

The faculty member's role in modeling integration and debriefing their experience was critical for the students to translate their experiences from something they had done to lessons they had learned.

### **Lessons Learned in Light of Student Reflections Using the Kingdom Professional Model**

These students' reflective experiences of faith, learning, and service in Malawi offer two crucial lessons for faculty interested in developing Kingdom-Minded Professionals through international service-learning programs. First, faculty need to consider the nature of the project to discern opportunities for students to envision how God may use their vocations for His glory. Second, the faculty member's role in designing the course, implementing the project, debriefing experiences, and modeling integration is critical for students to develop into Kingdom-minded professionals. The following discussion expands upon these lessons.

#### **Lesson One: The Nature of the Project**

Understanding the nature of an international service-learning project is essential to envision the integration of faith, learning, and service for a given course. The integration of faith, learning, and service looks different in academically driven programs than in evangelistically-driven programs. In a program where an evangelistic or a missions-oriented goal shapes the project, one would expect to see students explore how the lessons learned could address an immediate need and open the door to sharing the gospel. Although academically driven projects can share this same objective, projects where program objectives shape the experience prioritize ways for students to demonstrate program outcomes.

To integrate program outcomes with faith and service in light of the Kingdom Professional Model, one must ask the question of what it means for the Kingdom Professional "to (engage) the world to advance God's kingdom" (White & Jacobs, 2017, p. 2). As Stearns (2014) asserted, "the good news Jesus proclaimed had a fullness beyond salvation and the forgiveness of sin; it also signified the coming of God's kingdom on earth" (p. 15). This perspective may create tension for the Kingdom Professional Model because a traditional understanding of advancing Christ's Kingdom requires proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel. The

students in this study only communicated about their faith in terms related to personal growth and in ways a traditional understanding would characterize as a demonstration of the gospel. However, this discovery may be a place that requires some flexibility in the use of language from the Kingdom Professional Model. Students participating in integrated academically driven programs may get a new view of the Kingdom of God as they witness how God may redeem the world through their professions. Therefore, the language they use to speak about the experience is different. At the end of this project, the students used the language of social workers when they described the impact of community, collaboration, and participation in the destigmatizing work of becoming one among the people, as well as what it meant to love one's neighbor and experience joy despite the lack of resources.

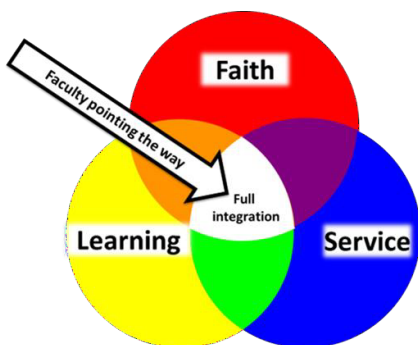
Even though the students did not use evangelistic language to describe their experience, they understood what it means to destigmatize a human condition so that healing can occur.

Their experience laid the groundwork for them to see that just as the chief objective of social work is to have a practical impact, a Kingdom impact means that there are practical differences that Christ can make through people to redeem the world. Although one could make the case that the model requires salvific language to actualize it entirely, this flexibility of the disciplinary language creates opportunities for students to develop a Kingdom vision for how God can use their vocations for His glory.

**Lesson Two: The Role of the Faculty**

The student reflections highlighted their need for faculty to facilitate the integration of faith, learning, and service to develop a Kingdom vision that fully integrates these three domains. For students to develop a Kingdom vision for how God can use their vocations for His glory, they need faculty to point the way. Figure 2 illustrates the faculty member's role in pointing the way to the full integration of faith, learning, and service. This study actualizes White's (2016) description of the journey faculty must take to integrate these domains for themselves.

**Figure 2:** Faculty member's role in promoting the



integration of faith, learning, and service.

Before faculty can point the way, they need to discern a Kingdom vision of their discipline for themselves. They must sustain this vision by designing, implementing, debriefing, and assessing each project. Then, they need to mentor students throughout the experience to help them make connections. The faculty member who led the global practicum pointed students to faith, learning, and service integration through modeling and reflection. Students referenced the faculty member's responses to different circumstances when they reflected upon each of the domains of the model. He modeled his Christian faith among the people as he showed his students how to practice his academic discipline in the service context. They also credited the debriefing sessions that the faculty member led for helping them connect their experiences with course content and the impact of their experiences upon their view of God and how He works in the world. When the researcher met with the faculty member following the student debriefing session, he expressed a desire to see the study results to assess where there are opportunities to help students fully integrate faith, learning, and service in the global context.

The next step in developing the project will be to seek additional opportunities to point students to biblical truths and impart a Kingdom vision for their professions. Future studies of the Kingdom Professional Model and the faculty member's role in facilitating integration are needed to assess it when faculty have designed courses and corresponding practice experiences with the model in mind.

**Practical Considerations of the Kingdom Professional Model as a Reflective Tool**

Three practical considerations of the Kingdom Professional Model to facilitate integration are worthy of consideration. The first two considerations demonstrate a limitation of the study. First, reflective activities that call students to share may mean they only share positive experiences. Future research using the Kingdom Professional Model as a reflective tool to incorporate private reflections separate from the group may encourage more transparency and highlight roadblocks to integration related to negative experiences within the domains (e.g., spiritual struggles or views of God that prohibit or reduce integration). A second consideration concerns how reflection might differ in disciplines that are not practice-oriented or one of the helping professions. Further research with students from other disciplines will help to answer the question of the generalizability of the Kingdom Professional Model to other fields.

The final consideration is both a strength and limitation of reflective exercises: the order in which the researcher introduced the domains may have shaped the discussion.

Since the researcher asked the students to reflect on their experiences in light of the individual domains, they initially limited their discussion to topics covered in class, the site where they served, and ways that the practicum challenged them personally. However, as students began to discuss points of overlap, they became energized and started to see connections. By the end of the debriefing session, the students offered takeaways from reflecting on the Kingdom Professional Model that captured their experience in light of the model. The strength of this approach is that it provides scaffolding for students to consider their experience through different lenses before considering how the domains may have overlapped. The limitation of this approach is that it is difficult to discern how students would have responded if they initially had an opportunity to consider their experience from a more holistic perspective. Future research with this model could present the model to the students and ask them to describe their experience in light of the model. Questions that ask students to describe the experience and assess whether the students discussed elements of learning, faith, and service might better address whether the model reflected the student's experience. However, it would not answer whether the Kingdom Professional Model effectively facilitates the integration of faith, learning, and service. This study accomplished that goal.

### Conclusion

White and Jacob's (2016, 2017) Kingdom Professional Model provides a helpful tool for educators interested in facilitating reflection of faith, learning, and service in international service-learning experiences. Student reflections from an international service-learning experience support the idea that integrating faith, learning, and service may look different depending on the nature of a given project; however, each discipline provides opportunities for students to develop a Kingdom-minded vision. To develop this vision, they need faculty to model the practice of integrating the identities of followers of Christ, servants, and professionals while debriefing experiences related to applying the discipline, faith development, and service in the cultural context. Future research where the faculty can use the model in course design, planning practice opportunities for the discipline in a cross-cultural context, reflective exercises, and assessment is needed to fully understand the model's utility in creating fully integrative experiences. Faculty seeking to incorporate this model within their teaching should do so with humility as fellow followers of Christ, learning to learn and live out faith through their discipline in a global context.

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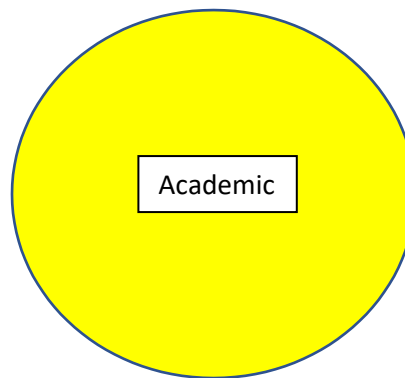
Appendix: Handout and Group Reflection Questions (spaces removed)

The below Yellow Circle represents the Academic component of your experience.

Below the circle:

Describe an academic component of your experience.

What did you learn about social work from your experience?



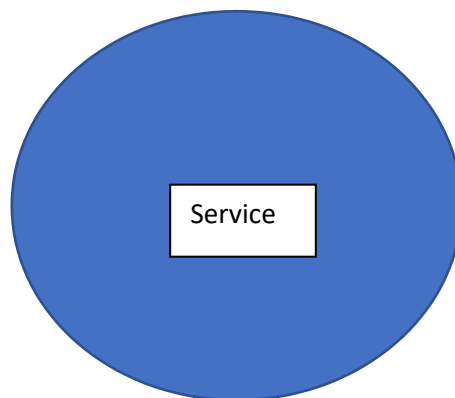
The below blue circle represents the service component of your experience

Below the circle:

Describe a service component of your experience.

What did you learn about service from your experience (How did the experience impact the way in which you view service)?

How did the local community benefit from your service?



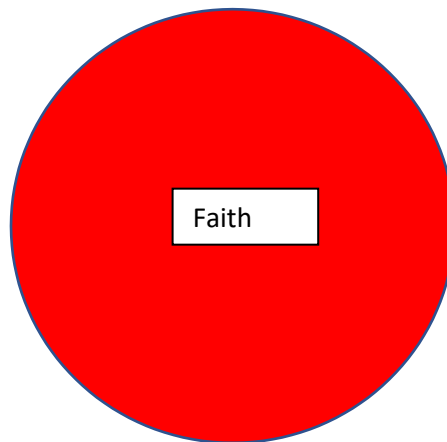
The below circle represents the faith component of your experience.

Below the circle:

Describe a formal and/or informal faith component of your experience (if evident)

What did you learn about your faith/God from your experience (if anything)?

Would you say that your experience made a Kingdom impact (Were people exposed to God and/or the Gospel?) If so, how?



Using the ideas of the three circles, draw a diagram that captures the academic, faith, and service components of your experience. On the following blank page, draw the diagram to demonstrate the significance of the component in the experience (For example, if faith was not a personally significant component of the experience, it might be small). If the academic discipline was a large component of the experience, it might be larger than the other circles. In your diagram, the circles may have overlapping circles (For example, if you applied lessons from your academic discipline in the service context, there would be overlap. If the service experience raised questions related to your faith, there would be an overlap between faith and service. If there were experiences where all three overlapped (The service experience taught lessons about faith and the academic discipline, all three circles would overlap). [note: these are only examples. Your experience may be different from the examples. Please draw the way that represents your experience.]

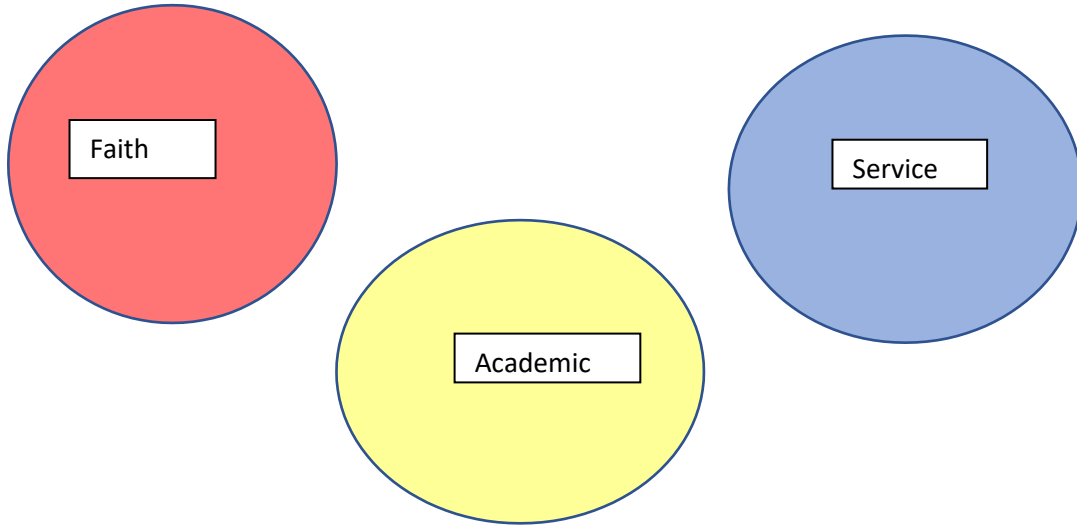




Diagram:

For each of your circles, why did you draw them the size that you did?

Describe the experiences where there was overlap between one or more of the circles.

As a class, draw a collective diagram of your experience.

Questions asked in the group:

Tell me about the experiences illustrated by the circles?

Describe the points of overlap on your diagram?

From here, I simply asked "What else?"