



Inspired Learning: 50 Insights from Personal Transformative Learning Journeys

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Inspired Learning is a collection of essays on the journeys that professors at the University of Central Oklahoma experienced on the way to becoming lifelong learners, inspiring their students to do the same. Each professor is the recipient of the university's teacher of the year award. The book focuses on their personal transformative pedagogies, an approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes inner development through a personal engagement with course material, leading students to a change in character. Hence, the book is situated in the larger context of student-centered learning with an emphasis on story (Tarrant, *A Practical Guide to Using Storyline Across the Curriculum*, Routledge, 2018).

The book is broken down into three parts. Part I details a no-excuses mentality to learning, where professors share stories of how they overcame personal adversity in their private and professional lives. Part II relates how mentor relationships contributed to their learning experiences and professional development. Part III explores new models of classroom learning and how they affect student-teacher relationships. Given the range of applications, teachers will find this text most helpful in the area of teaching advice, broad strokes for how to cope with problematic areas of work-life drama, and an overall sense of community with other scholars. The narratives themselves are helpful for expressing triumph over setbacks. Busy scholars will find quick implementable tips in what is perhaps the best part of the book, the appendix, which summarizes key points from each chapter. New faculty will find this book an encouragement on their professorial journeys in the face of overwhelming responsibilities and high demands.

There is not any material particularly suited for religion and theology teachers in *Inspired Learning*, except for some indirect ideas on how to present theology in narrative form. For instance, chapter 20, "On Being a Cross-Cultural Learner in Poland," explicates mass media teacher J. Kole Kleeman's experience of being an American in post-Communist Poland on Fulbright scholarship. His basic idea is that adapting to another culture changes one internally for the better. Theologians could relate this premise to the cultural interactions of the Roman Empire and ancient Israel, using analogies to explain differences in practice and theory. In this way, religious educators use story—the book's main pedagogical base—to generate transformative learning opportunities. Interesting chapters include lessons on service learning (chapter 1), learning as a process (chapter 5), the welcoming of human encounters (chapter 10), the importance of staying healthy (chapter 11), and empowering students in addressing their needs (chapter 18).

Overall, *Inspired Learning* would serve faculty looking for insights into basic transformative pedagogy without the technicality of a regular educational handbook. These stories remind us we are human with frailties, excellences, and all. We share these realities with our students, encouraging them down the roads we once traversed, hoping they will also find joy as lifelong learners.