



Q & A



### ***From Research to Teaching***

*A Guide to Beginning Your Classroom Career*

April 6, 2021 | \$20, 160 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3918-6

**Michael Kibbe** (PhD, Wheaton College) is associate professor of biblical studies and dean of communication and theology at Great Northern University in Spokane, Washington. He is the author of *Godly Fear or Ungodly Failure? Hebrews 12 and the Sinai Theophanies* and has written for journals such as *Biblica*, *Theology Today*, and the *Journal of Theological Studies*.

## A Guide to the Transition from Graduate Studies to Teaching

**IVP Academic Editor, Anna Moseley Gissing:** Your previous book, *From Topic to Thesis*, remains popular with readers, so it makes sense to have a follow-up to that one. Why did you decide to focus on the transition from graduate school to teaching for your next book?

**Michael Kibbe:** My father was a high school math teacher, and a good one. I mean, he could not only get from A (problem) to B (solution), he could show you how he did so, step by concrete step, and teach you to do likewise. So I suppose I'm drawn to situations in which we are given A and B but not necessarily shown how to get from one to the other. The movement from graduate school to teaching is definitely one of those situations! There's also some autobiography in all this: I moved from the church to the library (and had to learn how to research), and then I moved from the library to the classroom (and had to learn how to teach).

**You've been teaching for several years, but it's probably still pretty fresh as well. How does your current stage (not exactly new but not yet a teaching legend) help you author this book?**

**Kibbe:** Most books on teaching are written by the legends, and that's a good thing! But the early years of teaching are like the early years of parenting: for some things you need grandma (the "legend"), and for others you need some friends who are right alongside you or maybe just a few steps ahead. That's where I come in! This is year seven for me, which means—to follow the parenting analogy—I am no longer up at all hours of the night wondering how in the world I'm going to get this kid to fall asleep, but I still remember that stage quite clearly. My hope in this book is to be that friend who remembers those early years of teaching well enough to be a helpful dialogue partner for those still navigating them.

**What was the most unexpected challenge for you personally as you made the transition to teaching after grad school?**

**Kibbe:** Writing a dissertation is 90 percent perseverance—just keep going, keep digging, keep stubbornly insisting that you haven't yet gotten to the bottom of things, and eventually you will do precisely that. Five thousand hours of work to prepare for a two-hour dissertation defense. All of a sudden I had forty-five minutes to prepare for a ninety-minute class session, and not just once, but several times per week for the next four months. Rinse, repeat. It's like going from ultrarunning to Crossfit.



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**Tell us about the structure of the book. How would you describe the two sections and what they include?**

**Kibbe:** The book is intentionally—and, for an academic, somewhat counterintuitively—structured around what teachers must do (first) and what they must know (second). Putting doing before knowing reminds us that teaching is a skill, and you can't theorize your way into a skill. You have to go do it, and then, as you do it—and reflect on what you did—you'll come to know the things that will enable you to go back and do it again.

**You have a chapter of the book about the power of professors. Why is power an important concept to keep in mind as professors lean into teaching?**

**Kibbe:** Every year, from (roughly) July to October, my family in California lives under the threat of forest fires. Our students, likewise, live every day in the classroom under similar circumstances. The apostle James tells us that the tongue is a deadly flame, and we who speak for a living must never forget the power we possess—power to do incredible good, power to do inestimable evil. And since the best teachers can do the most damage, because their words have the most power, the invitation to great pedagogy is simultaneously an invitation to great caution.

**What is your hope for readers of your book?**

**Kibbe:** Intentionality is the irreducible minimum of great teaching. As I continue to grow as a teacher, I have this one hope above all: that I move closer and closer to doing everything on purpose. Everything from the fundamental course outcomes to the font size on the handout, from an assigned reading to the intonation with which I cite a specific phrase from it. This book is an invitation to others to join me on that journey—to think more deeply about why we teach the way we do at every level.



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