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The Time is Now

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this” (Ester 4:14, NIV). I have often had a fondness for this verse, in which Queen Esther is called to use her position in life to save her people from disaster. A specific time came where she needed to utilize her authority as queen in order to affect the world. The idea of helping other people in the world greatly appeals to me, as an aspect of my calling as a disciple of Christ. A disciple is someone who claims to be a follower of Christ, and displays this through actions. Disciples follow God’s commandments and attempt to display God’s love through their lives. Currently, I am about to finish my first semester at the Christian Liberal Arts college of Westmont, a place where my discipleship towards God can be strengthened through combining faith with learning. It is the year 2007, and my educational experience will strengthen my discipleship, leading me to influence the world in my particular circumstances to affect my own “time such as this”.

The first commandment of God that can be strengthened by a Christian Liberal Arts education is one of the two greatest commandments. Jesus once said, “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30, NIV). While this command to love God is central to discipleship, it implies disciples using all of their resources, such as their strength and mind, to know God
better. While all Christians can claim to love God, a Christian and a liberal arts education can help Christians love God “with all”. For instance, according to Simone Weil in her book *Waiting for God*, all education teaches the ability to focus on attaining truth without distractions. When students focus on assignments, they are generally practicing their abilities to ignore distractions. In addition, education teaches analytical skills, which involve analyzing documents, raising questions, and seeking answers. A Christian liberal arts education takes these concepts and applies them to studying God. A search for truth and the analytical skills are used to closely examine the Bible and doctrine of Jesus. Thus the Christian student learns more about God, and practices focusing attention on him. For me personally, this education helps to strengthen my faith in Christ. Although I have read the Bible and have had large segments of it taught to me, I have never studied it in an academic setting. Hopefully over my remaining years at Westmont, I can learn more about God and ask questions I currently do not know exist, by actively seeking to learn more about Him. As a Christian, my place in the world is to represent God through my life. The modern world is increasingly growing smaller. The economy is interconnected through international conglomerates and agencies such as The World Bank. The internet allows messages to be sent across the planet in about a minute. In this world, there are many different competing influences and loyalties between political and economic organizations and even nationalist groups. As a Christian I am called to represent God and his influence in the world. For instance, I do not believe that God supports the torture of people; therefore I need to take a stand against this practice. In this moment I yield to being a disciple of Christ over a citizen of the United States. I believe it is my place to influence other citizens and my government to institute policies that are set along the lines of God’s morals. Considering that torture is a current issue with the events in Iraq, it is important to preach God’s will. Through my education, by analytically
learning more about God, I can not only practice loving him with everything I have, but I can
understand where He, and therefore I, stands on issues concerning an integrated world.

While a Christian education helps disciples to love God more, it also strengthens the
second greatest commandment. Along with the commandment to love God, Jesus said, “The
second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself...’” (Mark 12:31, NIV). While disciples are
called to love God, they are also called to love each other and everyone else. This idea holds a
specific meaning when applied to a Christian liberal arts education. A liberal arts college teaches
interdisciplinary studies, without a particular focus on a single subject, such as math or biology.
As a result students gain the ability to examine an issue from scientific, historical, philosophical,
and many other perspectives. Meanwhile, a Christian education teaches students to not judge
other people. Personally, in classes such as English and History, I am taught to examine actions
based on the individual. For instance, the article “An Unnecessary War”, by John J. Mearsheimer
and Stephen M. Walt argues Iraq’s invasion of Iran and Kuwait as a form of defense against
threats to the Iraqi regime. As a Christian liberal arts student, I merge the idea of not judging
others with the multiple perspectives to examine issues from the perspectives of other people.
Hopefully, by actively trying to keep an open mind in class, I can gain new perspectives from the
writings and speeches of new individuals. The idea of loving others greatly contributes to my
place in the world. As a white male, I inherited a history of discrimination and oppression at
birth. In history, African colonies imperialized by whites gained freedom in the mid 1900s, while
African American civil rights movements gained victories during the same time. However, these
historical injustices still exist today. Many nations are still dominated by the economic needs of
their formal colonizers, and many people face discrimination on an individual level. Even the
benefits of the globalized economy are denied to many people, including those who live in
poverty or are unemployed. As a white man and a nondenominational Christian disciple, it is my place in the world to promote equality for all, even among different divisions of Christianity. Since my ancestors helped establish theses economic and social divisions through their actions, I have the historical duty to attempt to bring equality to people. While this can result in many actions, it always involves considering the motivations of different people. Looking back, it would have been better for me to consider the reasons behind the terrorists’ attacks on September 11, instead of just following the idea that they were “enemies against freedom”. While this is a radical example, a more peaceful example is simply considering the opinions of different social groups, promoting their interests, and listening to what they have to say. This even leads empathy towards others. In a Christian education, we students are taught to consider the figures of history as real people. Instead of seeing simple digits for the number of returning veterans during World War 1, we begin to see the disfigured faces of soldiers bearing mental burdens that no one will ever understand. For the world of today, this means actually seeing the homeless of Santa Barbara as real people instead of just shadowy figures sitting on the sidewalk. Although these people appear almost invisible to many on the streets, they are human beings who have their own stories of lives. I once met a man who was the last of a family of mountain men from northern California; he showed me the numerous stories of people that are most often lost. Hearing these stories only requires looking at these people differently. By learning to view people and events from different perspectives, a Christian student can enhance his or her ability to relate others, and therefore express the love of Christ by treating people as equals and examining the motivations for their actions.

This leads to a final aspect of Christian discipleship enhanced by a Christian education— the call to action. In a final commandment to his disciples, Jesus says, “Therefore go and make
disciples of all nations…" (Matthew 28: 19). The disciples of Christ are called to take action in the world for the Lord. Even the call to action is strengthened through education. In a liberal arts education, students are called to develop their positions on issues such as gay marriage, political organization, and social equality. Then they are taught to support their positions in the face of opposition. In addition they learn of influential people such as Joan of Arc, Gandhi, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Joseph Stalin who took stands for their beliefs and influenced the world. In a Christian institution, through community service, final papers, and even classroom assignments, students are called to apply themselves to bringing God into the world. A Christian Liberal Arts college calls students to take a stand for God and apply their abilities to serving him. In one semester I have heard of more opportunities to take action in the world then throughout my entire life. Currently, I do not know what God is calling me to do in my life. Hopefully, if I wait and listen for his calling, he will reveal it to me over the next three years. As a Christian student, receiving the gift of a quality education (a gift denied to many), it is my responsibility to take action in the world. For those who wish to help the homeless and those people in poverty, there are a range of programs such as the Food Bank or Loaves and Fishes. On an international scale, missionaries around the world help people who live in poverty through education, building houses and numerous other forms of assistance. Personally, I have witnessed an account of a group in Peru growing a park in a desert town. Whether assisting involves becoming a missionary to assist the people of a far off place, or helping the homeless on the streets of Santa Barbara, I am called as a student to stand for my beliefs, apply what I have learned and assist in serving others in the name of God.

It is 2007, about 20 years since the Soviet Union fell, about 100 years since “the war to end war”, about 500 years since Columbus discovered America, and about 2000 years since
Jesus came into the world. The world is not stagnant, but constantly changing: just like a river it always continues forward, but the direction can be altered. As a member of the next generation entering into the new world it is my place to affect the world for the better. In my current position at Westmont, I fortify my love for Christ and others, and long to take action in the world. As a result I come to my “time such as this”, today and all the days that follow. Right this moment, as a disciple of Christ, I am called to love God and carry his love to others as words and deeds. Just like the figures of history, I have the opportunity to currently affect the flow of the river, and influence the changing world inherited from the people of the past. One of these figures of history best summarizes the what Westmont teaches me to do as a disciple. “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”-Mahatma Gandhi.
Zachary Conley

You did an excellent job of considering the different questions via the arrangement of providing a lot of specific elements to draw a thorough picture.

A sense of God’s plan and a calling drives your essay. I wonder how you envision your calling at this particular point of your life. How can your particular background contribute to this calling? What might be the obstacles?

Who Am I?

My name is Zachary Christopher Conley. I was born on July 4, 1989 as an irreplaceable human being never to be created again. There is a distinguished niche in life that only I can fill. However, by fulfilling this specific spot I integrate myself into many different communities. These communities are different social groups that I consider myself a member of. Each community represents a different aspect of my life. When they overlap they mark my identity, what I present to the world as myself. This identity is a gift to the world that must be used. This peculiar picture of me symbolically represents the different pieces of my life.

First examining the bottom of the picture, the rock to my left represents the backbone of my identity. Specifically, the Bible and photo album sitting on the rock represent the firm foundation that I come from. Between my faith in God and my family, I have developed a strong moral background to stand upon. In the world, I know where I stand in my faith and decisions of morality. I choose to make good choices and treat everyone with respect. This contributes to the fact that I am at a Christian college. I am part of a group that wants to behave morally and represent Christ through our actions. As a student, I have a foundation to stand on, when facing decisions of life. The rest of my identity, the activities and choices I make are based upon this principle.

Can you describe your family? For instance, what type of church did you attend? Does your denominational background have any impact on how you see the world? What about your family?
While the rock appears natural to the setting, the television in the picture appears out of place. This represents my identity as a techie. Techie is a term for anyone who operates technology for different events. At my church in El Dorado Hills California, I handled computer and some video technology for student church services. This cultural group expands into my connection with technology. As a tech I have technology skills that others lack. For instance, I can handle video equipment, and judge sound quality. In addition, I enjoy video games and computer programs. I am a part of the internet generation, using technology in everyday life. Being a techie provides me with skills that I can contribute to the real world.

While the television reveals I am a techie, the books represent that I am a scholar. My idea of a scholar extends far beyond classrooms and schoolwork. When my friends and I go out for lunch we discuss movies, quantum physics, literature, and video games. One of my best friends can explain the importance of potatoes in the history of the development of Western civilization. As a scholar I belong to a group of intellects. We continue to ponder life even after leaving the classroom. As my dad often says, we try to be lifelong learners. In this community, I learn to apply knowledge to live, attempting to actually use what I have learned. This is another vital aspect of me. A thirst for knowledge is something I can use in the world.

Moving away from the items on the bench, I have a pencil stuck behind my ear, representing communication. A major aspect of my life is communication. At dinner time, my family gathers together to inquire of each other’s day. We spend time together, playing board games and other activities that involve communication. When I am with my friends, we often tell each other stories or riddles. My parents even tell my sister and me stories from their life that I share with others. This is a community of communication. It is pointless to have my identity, if I
lack the ability to share it with others. During any period of life, I must be able to communicate and interact with others. Therefore, communication is a part of my identity.

The sign I am making with my right hand is the salute used in the Boy Scouts of America. I am an Eagle Scout, an important portion of my life. Boy Scouts is a culture all of its own. First it teaches moral obligations that I firmly establish in my life. I believe in the importance of helping others, and the other laws supported by Boy Scouts. Secondly, being an Eagle Scout means that I have developed skills pertaining to outdoor survival, first aid and other subjects taught in Boy Scouts. Just as being a techie means that I have technical knowledge, being a scout means I have knowledge of the outdoors. The primarily natural backdrop of the picture reinforces this idea. I can tie knots, canoe, backpack, and even make a fire. Scouting provides me with skills that can be used to assist the world. Here again is a social group I belong to that teaches me skills for life. Scouting represents a large portion of the abilities I have developed over the course of my life, that now contribute to who I am.

While most items in the picture are symbolic of a deeper part of my identity, there is nothing symbolic of my clothes. The striped shirt and tan shorts are simply what I would consider as my style. Even the hat hanging from my arm is part of me; I have a habit of carrying a hat instead of wearing it. In a way, they represent a specific anti-culture I belong to. There are many individual traits that I have that separate me from stereotypical ideas of boys, Christians, and young adults. For instance, my friends and I love to go swing dancing. I would rather see a musical than a football game. I do not even drink coffee; the cup in my hand has hot chocolate. The clothes in the photo are what I enjoy wearing. I am part of an anti-culture, a group that stands out from the typical cultural ideas of my generation. Part of my identity is just being who

Yet isn’t youth culture also usually composed of groups that claim to be counter-cultural?
I am. In the real world I have learned to be myself, not what other people want me to be. I accept who I am.

Finally, the gaze on my face into the distance recognizes the fact that I am a dreamer. I long to make an impact on the world by making a difference in the lives of other people. One of my favorite pastimes is simply thinking of ideas for the future. I want to become involved in clubs and ministries in a hope to help change the world. Currently, I am at college where there are many people ready to assist the world and prepare for the tasks of the future. I fit into the culture of a Christian college, since I want to go out and serve the world in the name of the Lord. One of my strongest characteristics is the fact that I want to make a difference.

As I have explained, this picture represents me. Who am I? I have a moral background of faith and family to stand on. I have the skills of a scholar, a tech and a scout. I am a dreamer hoping for a better tomorrow. I accept myself for what I am and am willing to communicate all of this to others. This picture was taken at Westmont College, where my class’s signature verse reminds the students to use the gifts that Lord has given them. As a student at Westmont, it is my duty to use my education to better the world. I know what I believe, and am armed with skills and a hope for the future. My identity is perfectly crafted to fill a specific niche in this world. As a student, I need to supply myself in entirety to being involved on campus. It is important that I fully contribute my full identity, the overlap of my different cultural communities, to the world. This is me.
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Christian Liberal Arts

A distinguished feature of Westmont College that separates it from other institutions is its identity as a Christian Liberal Arts College. This term Christian Liberal Arts can have many different meanings, each describing an aspect of the Liberal Arts education that contributes to the student’s identity as a Christian. Simone Weil expresses one particular viewpoint in his essay “Reflection on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God,” in the collection Waiting for God. According to Weil, the true, underlying meaning of education is to allow students to focus their attention on prayer, leading towards patience and a desire for the Lord. Schoolwork allows students to truly focus their attention, and develop a desire for obtaining absolute truth. By using this attention and desire, students can strengthen their relationships with God and others who are suffering.

In the collection Engaging God’s World, author Cornelius Plantinga expresses a different opinion in his essay “Vocation and Education.” Plantinga articulates the idea that a Christian Liberal Arts education promotes a combination of knowledge, skills and virtue. Knowledge and skills provide Christian students with the ability to address the issues of the world through a Christian perspective and practical solutions. A student learns virtue, when they develop habits from practicing moral behavior. These same ideas are expressed in Westmont College’s, “What Do We Want From Our Graduates?” The college wishes to change students’ lives by providing
them with the ability to face world issues with Christian ideals and practical skills. Westmont College wants to establish the same combination of intellect, skills and morality.

A common thread of all three arguments, a strengthened faith and Christian lifestyle is a strong component of a Christian Liberal Arts Education. A Christian education allows students to further their relationships with God. Whether following Weil’s idea of a desire for truth, or Plantinga’s idea of developing virtue, a student at a Christian Liberal Arts college should develop a Christian lifestyle through the incorporation of God into the classroom. By involving Christianity into secular subjects students have the opportunity to strengthen their relationships with the Lord. First, students can analytically comprehend the Bible, miracles, and other Christian ideas. Through studying Christianity in a classroom environment students can analytically examine what they believe. Their faith is no longer only based on what they have been told, but what they themselves have learned. In all different disciplines God is taught along with the subject. Secondly, by incorporating Christianity into a liberal arts education, students can develop a sense of morality. Inside the classroom, students discuss Christian perspectives concerning issues such as poverty or even the development of religion. Outside the classroom at a Christian college students develop scruples such as honesty towards schoolwork, and lifestyle choices. The Christian environment of the college reinforces the idea of a Christian lifestyle.

Either way, a Christian Liberal Arts Education allows students to strengthen their relationship with the Lord. They have stronger knowledge of God and stronger morality. As discussed in Westmont’s expectations, a Christian Liberal Arts education can change a student’s life, and help make them a better servant of the Lord.

In addition to strengthening relationships with God, a Christian Liberal Arts education acts as education, providing practical skills that can be used in the name of Christ. While a
Christian education incorporates Christ, it still provides practical knowledge to students concerning areas of discipline. One example is the development of strong arguments. However, this knowledge is taught in a way that still brings glory to God. According to Weil, education teaches the necessary skill of focusing attention. When students focus their attention on God they strengthen their relationships with Him. When students focus attention on others, they are able to reach out to them. However, the skills learned in a Christian Liberal Arts education expand beyond simply paying attention to the Lord. Students can take the practical skills learned in the classroom and expand them into the real world. The first ideal that Westmont College desires for its students states, “Graduates should possess interpersonal competence that enables them to listen respectfully, ask questions thoughtfully, self-disclose appropriately, give feedback honestly and sensitively, participate in dialogue, work with a group, and be characterized by tolerance and appreciation of differences” (Westmont College, “What Do We Want From Our Graduates”). Students learn practical skills such as listening, which allow them to communicate with others and share Christianity. Practical knowledge is taught at a Christian Liberal Arts College in a fashion where the students can still use all that they learn to serve Christ. They are simply taught the skills with a Christian perspective.

In general a Christian Liberal Arts education provides students with an education that brings God into everything. This education causes growth on both a practical and spiritual level. Students strengthen their relationships with Him and develop a Christian lifestyle through studying Him in the classroom. On a practical level, classes still teach educational skills that can be used in the name of the Lord in the real world. Just as a liberal arts college provides many different areas of study, a Christian Liberal Arts College provides many different levels to study Christianity.
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Westmont College, “What do We Want from our Graduates?”
"Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s" (Matthew 22:21 (NIV)).

This quotation of Scripture is Jesus’ response to a question concerning Jews paying taxes to Rome. Even today, Christians face conflict between their loyalty to God and their loyalty to the state. In the year 2007, I am both a Christian and a citizen of the United States of America; two identities that are not in perfect unison. My identities as an American and a Christian overlap in the area of respect, but can be incompatible with governmental policy choices that go against Christian morals. This argument is assisted by the photo collection “Democracy 2004” by Richard Avedon, Cultivating Humanity by Martha Nussbaum, and the articles “Dispelling the “We” Fallacy from the Body of Christ: The Task of Catholics in a Time of War” by Michael J. Baxter and “Old Glory” by Susan Willis.

Despite any incompatibility between a Christian identity and national identity, there is common ground. A national identity basically consists of having citizenship within a nation; this leads to supporting the government of the nation. Two of the basic ideals that are often connected to American nationalism are diversity and freedom. America still prides itself upon being a great “melting pot”. As seen by the mixture of photos in Avedon’s collection, Americans vary in religion, social class, political party and other aspects of life that establish their identities. In addition, the American government supports tolerance of this diversity. Under the

really? Can love for one’s nation actually lead to resistance to one’s government?
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Constitution, Americans cannot be discriminated against based upon race, ethnicity, gender or religion. This is a distinguished point of overlap between being a Christian and an American. Christians are called by Jesus to love everyone. According to Jesus, everyone is equal, for no one is worthy of the kingdom of God. Personally, I see no conflict between being a Christian and an American when it comes to respecting other people. Legally as an American citizen and morally as a Christian, I am called to treat everyone as equals.

While American diversity may follow Christian ideals, other governmental policy can have varying support among Christian. Any Christian must decide if a government policy follows Christian morality. This question in itself can have multiple answers. As Mrs. Nussbaum mentions in her work, any culture will have a wide range of opinions. This is even true for the Christian culture. Depending on the denomination of Christianity, and individual beliefs different Christians can vary in governmental support. As mentioned by Michael J. Baxter in his article, different Christians have different opinions concerning war. Dorothy Day, a Catholic living in 1939, believed that Catholics should be pacifists based on the teachings of Jesus. Whereas, Elizabeth Anscombe, another Catholic disapproved of the British war on Germany, since the positive consequences of fighting are outweighed by the negative consequences. Here two Catholics develop different opinions on a government’s declaration of war. These examples do not even consider the different responses Protestants had to the declaration. A Christian identity will not guarantee a single opinion of government action.

No matter the possible responses, all Christians should question supporting the actions of their nation. Currently, this question involves the events in the Middle East. Since Christians of this generation have grown along with the aftermath of 9/11 and the war on terror, the war is embedded within their national identities. After the war began, nationalism increased within the
United States, as people came together as one nation after the attacks on 9/11. As Susan Willis mentions within her article, people began donating blood, buying flags, and attempting other ways to show their loyalty to the nation. She mentions that some people even felt ideological “peer pressure”; other people believing that anyone not in support of the United States was against it. At such a point, a Christian in America, must chose a position. If Christians feel that the war is morally wrong and refuse to support it, or support a war they view just there, they have still reflected on a Christian’s perspective. This displays the possibility that American and Christian beliefs do not always overlap.

Personally, as a Christian college student, and an American citizen, I enclose both national and Christian identities. As unpatriotic as it may seem, I believe that I am a citizen of the Kingdom of God before I am a citizen of the United States of America. However my Christian and American ideas of equality are identical. I believe that all men and women are indeed equal and that no person should be discriminated against. However my Christian morality also conflicts with my national identity. Therefore, as previously stated, I do not support every government decision. For a specific example, I do not believe that the government should torture prisoners. As a Christian, I see this act as mistreating the neighbors that should be loved. In social areas, the government does not regulate. Usually, the government leaves social issues to the opinion and morality of the individual. I will support or reject this governmental choice if I believe that I can honestly support the decisions as a Christian. For instance, I do not support the government allowance of abortion. As a Christian I see this as killing an unborn child. My Christian identity dominates over my national identity. Where they agree, I can patriotically support the government. Where they disagree, I will support the morality of my Christian identity over the nationalism of my American identity. This is how I am an American Christian.
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Poems

_Leaving Scars (Poem about World War I)_

Hopes of swift battle blasted away,

Total war strikes, now all are to pay

Disfigured soldiers, barely alive

Grandeur smashed, though machinery thrived

World made to bear self inflicted scars

__Still... (Poem about War in Iraq)__

Arms taken up as they march from the home,

Country divided, were we right or wrong?

Guarding a nation, when defense they need,

Methods of torture, republic unsought

Still support the troops, who give life to fight
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Wars

The poem “Leaving Scars” focuses on the cost resulting from World War One. In this piece, I discussed the lasting impact on the world caused by the First World War, mentioning critical aspects of the postwar world. Lines discuss: the human casualties of the war (heavily influenced by the website of the mutilated soldiers), the loss of images of European “superiority”, the concept of “total war” and the use of machine guns and technology to increase the time and destruction of the war. The last line hopefully indicates that the destruction in Europe was a result of the war Europe started. In general, I wanted this poem to communicate most of the negative effects caused by the war. For me, the cost of the war is crucial knowledge. The remembrance of the impacts of the First World War allow others to question supporting the causes of another war, by knowing what the results could be.

Causation is discussed in “Still…” the poem discussing the current war in Iraq. While the consequences of the war are already vast, the conflict still continues. Therefore, there are currently no post war impacts. However, there are currently debates over the justification for the war. The second poem discusses the idea that the war was started to protect Americans, while examining events in Iraq such as torture and bringing democracy to the people. The final line of the poem reflects my own opinion that no matter the cause, it is important to support the troops willing to risk their lives for their family and country. Learning of the First World War teaches of...
the physical and metal cost to the soldiers who fought. In this century, where the troops are once again paying this cost, it is important to honor their sacrifice, even when questioning the cause.

What is to be thought of Iraqis?
An Honest Tribute

An assortment of items, carrying particular knowledge of my grandparents, can be found within a wooden box on my dresser. These items include dog tags, knives, necklaces and other relics that once belonged to my relatives. If given the opportunity to develop an exhibit on one of my grandparents, this box would be the starting point for the display. Unfortunately, to create an honest and accurate display of one of my grandparents would require much more than gathering together a few family heirlooms. The goal of a historical exhibit on a grandparent would be to develop an accurate and honest display that links the subject of the display with those who view it. This same goal, and the challenges associated with it, can be applied to speaking about the life of any person.

The first step and difficulty in making an exhibit on a grandparent is obtaining accurate information about his or her life. Personally, I have limited knowledge of my grandparents since they live on the opposite coast of the United States. In order to create a full exhibit, I would research my relative, looking through family pictures and questioning other people who know them. While this provides a large amount of information, accuracy is limited. The knowledge of my grandparent placed into the exhibit would be based on individual memories, which can be altered to display people in a different light. Individuals, wishing to remember my grandparent in a particular fashion, can recall specific events that bring out high points of my grandparent’s life, or adjust bad memories to remember my grandparent more kindly. The information describing
my grandparent is more opinionated than accurate. In addition, the information provided is based around particular incidences of my grandparents’ lives. My grandfather is much more than his dog tags from serving in Korea, whereas my grandmother is more than the painted statues she gave my mother. When describing the life of a grandparent, or any person, to be accurate requires displaying the entire story, not just recalling particular events from his or her life. 

One of the most difficult aspects about developing a display or speaking of another person is presenting an honest view of his or her life. As stated, individuals recalling my grandparent will insert their own opinions into the information they provide. Considering I am the grandson of the individual on display, I will also put my own opinion into what I present. What I would include in the display would express the positive qualities of my grandparent and the high points of his or her life, whereas, someone who disliked my grandparents would include information showing negative qualities and experiences. Personal feelings towards the subject make an accurate display of an individual’s life extremely difficult to create. To truly speak of a person’s life in its totality requires displaying both the good and bad qualities of a person. While good qualities may arise through events depicting self sacrifice and kindness, negative qualities may come from events showing greed or other undesired traits. As a Christian it is important to speak of each other honestly. Considering we are all sinners, a Christian cannot judge the character of a person from their mistakes. In fact, the inclusion of the negative events of a person’s life in a tribute can actually highlight the positives. A person with many accomplishes appears even greater if they have also shown themselves to make mistakes that were overcome. This is one of the greatest challenges of describing another person’s life, honestly describing the life of a person in totality without any bias.
Connecting the audience with the real person behind the display is another difficult challenge when attempting to exhibit another person’s life. When making the display of my grandparents, it is assumed that people will come to view it, acting as an audience for the life placed before them. However, this may force the exhibit to morph into a piece of art instead of a tribute. Similar ideas are discussed by Frank Lentricchia and Jody McAuliffe in their article “Groundzeroland”. Within the article, they quote a music critic named Anthony Tommasini concerning comments of the events of September 11th seen as a form of art. Among his other quotes, Tommasini theorizes, “Art may be hard to define, but whatever it is, it’s a step removed from reality” (Hauerwas, 351). This quote can be applied to any description of a person’s life, where the sentimental connection may be lost in the art form. When the audience views the display of my grandparent, it is easy to just see an abstract outline of a person, which can be quickly observed and forgotten. To develop a display that respectfully recalls his or her life requires connections that allow the audience to imagine the struggles, hardships, victories and triumphs of the subject of the display. The same can be said for describing any person’s life. To respectfully depict anyone’s story requires depicting the person as more than a piece of art.

While this may differ for each person, it involves depth within the exhibit that is more than a quick summary of the person’s life. An honest tribute provides depth to the subject, forcing the viewers to take a longer look before passing by. As Lentricchia and McAuliffe mention, most people that have never met my grandparents can only envision them as abstract ideas. However, a respectful tribute, made by someone who cares for and respects the subject, will attempt to bridge the gap by fully showing the deep meaningful life of the person.

Whether developing an exhibit for a grandparent or simply describing the life of a person, it is important to display the subject both accurately and honestly. Despite challenges, biases, and
lack of depth, this goal can display a person’s life to the full extent, thus creating a sincere and honest tribute.
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