Why We Study in Community

“I’ve made a huge mistake.” Have you ever said that about your seminary experience? If you are here, it’s probably because you want to train for ministry, but there are so many ways to do ministry today. You could plant churches with Acts 29. You could work with a para-church ministry. You could go overseas with Wycliffe. So why come to RTS? Without offense to organizations like these, I think RTS offers something they do not: an academic learning community.

People come to seminary from many backgrounds. Some have just graduated college, others in mid-life career changes. A few of you majored in theology, and some of you are really getting your first real taste of the richness of theology. There are Americans and International students and we have all come to become better prepared for our callings. It is in this environment that we can get the kind of training our professors could never give. When people from various personal, theological, ethnic, and ecclesial backgrounds all come into dialogue with one another, we all learn how to better interact with the world – both Christian and non.

Our seminary experience is high on information, and I often hear students ask what are we supposed to do with this? I doubt the heart behind that question is ‘this information is not important’, but rather ‘do I agree with it’ and ‘how do I put it into practice.’ This is where an academic community is so crucial to our theological formation. When you find yourself struggling through the ramifications of covenant theology – and you will – hearing the input of Baptists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans will challenge your theology and hopefully sharpen it. The oft-quoted proof-text for accountability works here too: “As iron sharpens iron, so one sharpens another” (Prov 27:17). As we engage with dialogue about what we are learning, we help to shape each other’s theology and thus our future churches.

It is my hope that while you are here you will take the opportunity to engage your fellow students. This community is a great place to work out our own little heresies in a controlled environment; where we grow in our understanding of Scripture; and hopefully each other. It is in these discussions that I have enjoyed my RTS experience most and feel better prepared for my ministry. I hope that you too will not miss this opportunity.

Tim Trouten
Student Cabinet President, RTS Orlando
MDiv Student