

## Acknowledging God in dissertations

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*These are responses that were received from folks on the GCF when asked about acknowledging God in their dissertations. They are only numbered to distinguish responses from each other.*

1.) That's a great question and I just wanted to encourage you to mention God in your acknowledgements - definitely. Since God was a major source of strength when I worked on my thesis research, I wanted to ack Him. I'm betting you are in a similar situation.

If it helps, here's what I wrote in the ack section for my Ph.D. thesis at Yale:

I have not lived anywhere else as long as these past thirteen years in New Haven. This city has been a remarkable time of growth for me, especially from being surrounded by so many amazing people - from all walks of life. I thank my brothers and sisters in Christ at Trinity Baptist Church for an amazing period of growing and walking in the Lord. I feel very privileged to study His creation at the level of protein molecules. To quote an outstanding graduate student who obtained the Ph.D. in MB&B a few years ago, and who also was one of my teachers: "I am not a religious man, but it is hard to escape the feeling that, underneath all the bickering, the rivalry, the grant applications and the reviewer's comments, there is something of the Divine in what we do." I am convinced that, not only do we find the Divine in the process of our work, I see God's hand in the creation that we study. I agree with what was written long ago: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 1, verse 20, New International Version of the Bible). To study this amazing creation, particularly at the molecular level, adds an entire dimension of excitement to my research.

2.) Yeah, my acknowledgments were one of the toughest and most fun parts of the dissertation to write. I went on for about 3 pages. The last paragraph was about my gratitude to God framed by my belief that all good gifts come from God.

I could fire a copy off to you, if you'd like, but that might not be as helpful. I'm guessing it's more thinking through what to reveal about what is and has been important to you and what is "appropriate" in the context, for the committee etc.

Another thought just came to mind (it might be corn-ball, so feel free to roll your eyes and forget about it!)--what about writing a draft to God?,, what is it you would most like to say in gratitude... and only after that, perhaps a few days later, look at it again and figure out what, if any of it, should be included in the public version.

3.) A friend of mine dedicated his M.S. thesis as follows:

"Thesis topics come and go, but the musical stylings of Journey are forever.

*don't stop believing...* "

My point is that I think you can and should say how you feel in this section. Hey, even if you want to blame God for all the misery, here's your chance.

4.) Personally, in my thesis I did acknowledge our grad group at Caltech for general friendship and support. I know at least a few people who have used Ecclesiastes 12:12 in their dedication: Of making many books there is no end.

Now that I catalog dissertations as part of my job, I always look at the acknowledgments and dedication, just out of curiosity. There are many people who put some sort of generic religious statement in their acknowledgments. You might see some examples if you flip through some dissertations in your department.

There was one that stood out to me (that I just looked up): First and foremost, I would like to thank God for giving me wisdom and guidance throughout my life.

I think it stood out because I knew this guy, but I hadn't known he was a Christian.

5.) I just read a dissertation from DIA, in which the author said, "I thank my mother, who taught that I 'can do all things through Christ who gives me strength'." I thought that was a gentle way to handle it!

6.) Hmm... I don't remember and I don't have a copy of my own thesis. I have [a friend's] and it doesn't. I think I have seen some that do from the Caltech GCF although I don't think it's all that common. You can pretty much write anything in the acknowledgments as far as I can tell.

7.) There is a God-reference on the dedication page and in the second paragraph of the acknowledgements. I guess it's not a direct expression of gratitude towards God, but it does clearly acknowledge Him.

Dedication page: He named it Ebenezer saying "Thus far has the Lord helped us." –1 Samuel 7:12

In the acknowledgements section: I also want to thank my friends at Graduate Christian Fellowship, who have met with me almost every week for the past five years and have encouraged me to press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

8.) I didn't acknowledge God but I'm not sure if I should...

9.) I did thank God in the acknowledgement section. And I also included a biblical epigraph. (Jonah2:3) The acknowledgements are probably the most read part of your dissertation with regards to friends and family. I thought it was an appropriate place to thank God since we don't tend to include thanksgiving in acknowledgements on published articles.

10). In the Acknowledgements section:

I thank my faith families at North Clairemont United Methodist Church and in the Graduate Christian Fellowship for their support, perspective, and encouragement. I am grateful for God's provision of joys, challenges, and grace for growth.