

HUMILITY AND HOSPITALITY

*Elizabeth L. Adams**

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

—Luke 14:11–14, *English Standard Version*

John was my professor, my mentor, and my friend. His impact on my life continues to reverberate in profound ways.

I earned my lowest law school grade in his class because I answered an exam question about cows and property lines with musing about political theory. As John issued my objectively terrible grade, he also offered me a job as his research assistant—he found my thoughts about sustainability and the social compact interesting albeit not the appropriate exam response. I worked for him all through law school and took every course he taught. John encouraged my academic interests, even though those ranged from environmental conservation to religious philosophy. Studying a variety of topics would make me more well-rounded, a stronger thinker, he said. His scholarship varied, too. As his research assistant, he would have me focused on lame duck politicians one day and obscure endangered species the next. John believed that all of these topics were interconnected, part of a larger, more important discourse about moral and ethical duties. He was a prolific scholar, an elegant thinker. I often felt out of my depth supporting his academic pursuits. But John had a gift of inviting others

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to participate, highlighting the unique perspectives that each could bring. He made the law accessible for his students and welcomed us to contribute.

John guided me into my career in energy law. When I had an opportunity to leave my legal practice and take on a business leadership role at an electric utility company, John encouraged me to grab hold of the opportunity, to expand my reach. He found it humorous that my first-year rambles about sustainability and the social compact led to a career where I supported billions of dollars of investment on behalf of the public good. As I worked on large-scale infrastructure and complex financial transactions, we would debate about the social and ecological impact of a project. When I struggled with tough work issues, he would remind me to take a wider lens. John inspired me to approach my career as a calling. He had a purpose-driven career, and he helped me build a purposeful path of my own. Years after I submitted papers about birds and windmills in his biodiversity seminar, John would invite me back to his classes to lecture about innovation and renewables on our electric grid. He encouraged me to write and teach, insistent that I could offer academic value and practical insights. It humbled me when he would introduce me as a peer. John brought me and many others into his circle of academic discourse.

It was an honor to bear witness to John's life. He lived with authenticity; his faith permeated all things. John loved all God's creatures—generations of students can attest to his passion for the [insert weird endangered species that he always talked about—that frog or lizard or fish]. His largest love and most profound devotion were reserved for his wife, Lisa, and daughters, Laura and Julia. John did not separate his personal life from his professional life; the richness of one enhanced the abundance of the other. His love story with Lisa, the girls' school activities, and their latest family vacation to a national park always made their way into the syllabus. But he didn't just share stories, he shared his actual family with us. The Nagle family welcomed so many of us into their home and into their lives. Watching the girls grow up, seeing John and Lisa support each other as true companions, and loving on Digory (their sweet dog) all provided an example of a Christ-centered, family-focused life. There was always openness at their table.

John was a connector. He brought people together: dinner at the Nagle house had you sitting amongst esteemed judges, accomplished scholars, courageous missionaries, or world travelers. He paid attention to the details: he would introduce people across countries or continents because they shared obscure interests or similar childhood experiences. He tied academic concepts to moral, ethical, and

religious obligations: his writings on lame duck actions are about accountability; his works on endangered species and environmental regulation explore our responsibility to the natural world; his scholarship on biodiversity challenges us to think about the value of otherness. John left behind an unfinished yet impressive canon on humility and environmental law. His teachings on humility impact my decisions, business strategies, and how I lead teams. John lived in communion with God, connecting scriptural teachings to his everyday actions. As revealed in the parables of Luke, humility and hospitality are spiritually rooted and reveal God's love and grace. John's legacy is grounded in these Christian values—he walked humbly, lived attentively, and met others with genuine warmth. And because we knew him, we were blessed.

