

Interview with Emma Buckles

**Junior, Samford University
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LaToya Leary: Thanks for meeting with me again Emma. Tell us more about yourself.

Emma Buckles: Yes, so my name is Emma Buckles. I'm a current junior at Samford University. I'm a religion major with a minor in social entrepreneurship and nonprofit business. I am currently the vice president of Theta Alpha Kappa, the religion honor society here, and the vice president of our pre-ministerial scholars program here, which is a program of people who are religion majors who want to go into vocational ministry... which has been so much fun. I'm currently also the president of Pi Omega which is a national sorority on campus.



LaToya Leary: Thank you so much. So tell us more about your response... the thoughts and feelings you had when Dr. Leonard invited you to participate in this partnership.

Emma Buckles: So I was home for break and just look up to my phone to an email... was not expecting anything... had no idea anything was coming and I didn't know what to think. I was so shocked. My jaw just kept hitting the floor and... I was like, "what is happening?". I would be lying to you if I said there weren't tears because it was just so shocking. I had no idea anything like this... really existed. I guess I knew that they all... wrote, but I didn't know that they used undergraduates. I don't think a lot of them do and so it was just like, "Oh my goodness this is happening... I could be published in an article... this is crazy". And so then I just immediately called my parents and said, "Dr. Leonard just emailed me and asked me to co-write a paper with him. I don't know what to do". I said yes.... So I was just shocked, but also equally super excited... He told me... it was on the Bible Odyssey and I immediately went and looked that up. I realized that I... had used the site to do some preliminary research for the paper I wrote before I went to Israel... and so the whole site was pretty familiar to me. I was like, "Oh my gosh... I'm going to be on here and... people can use article what we write to do research for their papers". I was just overall shocked.

LaToya Leary: So what about how you felt when you actually saw your name next to a published article?

Emma Buckles: I think, "wow, it has happened" ... "and you are capable of this... and somebody believes in you"... I think for a long time I didn't know... what I wanted to do after undergrad. All I knew is that I was here, I was studying religion, and some people are going to seminary. I didn't really know. But over this past year... I just really found out that I love to write and I love to research... so what does it look like to do more of this... and how can I do more of this my own. It's such an incredible feeling... like this is possible.

LaToya Leary: Thank you so much for that! So in this project, you were able to experience the writing and publication process in ways that a lot of undergraduates do not typically experience. Can you tell me a little bit more about what you encountered? Can you talk a little bit more about how that process in itself might have impacted you?

Ahaz

by Emma Buckles; Jeffery Leonard

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel." With these famous words, the venerable King James Version of the Gospel of Matthew heralds the birth of Christ (Matt 1:23). Long before these words were applied to Jesus, though, they were delivered by a particular prophet to a particular king whose kingdom seemed to be on the verge of collapse. The prophet was Isaiah, and the king who seemed destined to lose his kingship was Ahaz, ruler of Judah.



Who Was Ahaz?

The name Ahaz is a shortened form of names like Ahaziah and Jehoahaz, which mean "The Lord holds." Ahaz ruled over Judah from 742–727 BCE, and accounts of his reign are preserved in 2Kgs 16, 2Chr 28, Isa 7, and various Assyrian annals. While it is difficult to reconcile all of the events they describe, we can piece together the basics of his story and some of the dilemmas he faced.

At the heart of Ahaz's dilemma stood the menacing empire of Assyria. Under the brutal emperor Tiglath-pileser III, Assyria's domination of its neighbors had reached crisis levels. The nation of Aram and the northern kingdom of Israel wanted to stem the tide of Tiglath-pileser's advances by launching their own war against Assyria. When the southern King Ahaz refused to join their cause, Aram and Israel invaded Judah and threatened to replace Ahaz with a king more to their liking. The king was caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Fighting mighty Assyria was a fool's errand, but not joining the fight might get him killed all the same.

What Was Ahaz to Do?

Emma Buckles: I didn't really know where we were going to start. I know when I write my papers, I research, but I wondered where he starts. He's definitely done way more of this than I have as a scholar and so... I didn't really know. Dr. Leonard told me that the topic was gonna be King Ahaz and had emailed me a few articles. He told me, "Hey,... read through these and read these Bible passages of where he's mentioned and we'll go from there." And so from there we really just kind of broke all those articles down and... took... 5

pages of material and broke it down into outlines.... After doing the small outline, we really annotated it and put in some paragraphs and from there formed what you all see today. Overall, it wasn't that much different than what we do in a normal paper... I don't know why it feels different, but it felt different. After we finished, we sent it off to SBL....

Honestly, the most impactful part of the experience was being able to see Dr. Leonard in the writing mode. He was teaching me things not as a student, but more as a peer. ...In the writing and publishing process, I didn't feel like I was a junior sitting in class, trying... to figure out certain things. I was a peer and he was welcoming of any of my advice and having me read over things and... I was putting things down. ...It was just really cool to see him in that scholarly mode because I only really see him in class. I loved it. ... He was really empowering me and letting me help him... and we really worked together.

LaToya Leary: Excellent! Thank you so much. It's really great to hear that you were able to feel like your colleagues... like you are... a fellow scholar co-writing with the same power... the same agency. I can imagine that would be amazingly empowering as an undergraduate. Thank you so much for sharing. Do you have any other... anything else that you'd like to share?

Emma Buckles: I guess if there are just any undergraduate students that's listening, just reach out to your professors. They want you to succeed. That's what they're there for... to help you succeed. I'm so thankful I had this opportunity and I hope I get more in the future.... I hope that more of my undergraduate peers get the opportunity to do something like that 'cause it truly can change your college experience and make you feel like you're not just here to study, and take tests, and write papers, but you are really here to prepare for the rest of your life.

LaToya Leary: Great advice! Thank you again for meeting with me.