



THE  
CLASSICAL SCHOOL  
OF THE FIRST ACADEMY

# Summer Reading Assignment

## **Assignment 1. Read *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell**

In *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell considers the circumstances that lead to success. The first half of the book looks closely at how opportunities matter more in the lives of successful people than hard work or raw talent. The second half of the book focuses on cultural legacies: behavioral tendencies rooted in their ancestral past.

The concept of being an “Outlier” resonates with Christians because of its parallels to the Christian life. As Christians, we often make choices that go against the “normal rules” of human reasoning in order to abide by God’s biblical principles. To an uncalled individual, our actions may seem strange and unorthodox. As a result, we sometimes feel ostracized from others because of our decisions.

Gladwell stresses the importance of *community* as a driving force behind success. This resonates with what I have come to understand as a very biblical concept. Humans are innately social individuals who were created to live within community. We are interdependent and our identity is bound to the communities in which we live.

interdependent and our identity is bound to the communities in which we live.

**a. After you have read the book, write a two-page essay explaining how Christians can impact their community as an “outlier”. (typed, double-spaced, 12 pt., Time-New Roman font) AND respond to Number 1, 2, or 3 below.**

Essay Prompt: Gladwell opens his book with a dictionary definition of the word “outlier.” It is “something that is situated away from or classed differently from a main or related body,” and also “a statistical observation that is markedly different in value from others of the

sample." His first example of an outlier is the town of Roseto, Pennsylvania in the first half of the 20th century.

1. In your own words, give a definition of an outlier. Use examples from *Outliers* to support your answer.

2. Discuss the reasons you think outliers are valuable for research purposes. Use examples from *Outliers* to support your answer.

3. Explain, in your own words, why the town of Roseto, Pa. is an outlier and make-up another example of a town that would be an outlier. Use examples from *Outliers* to support your answer.