

THCH 8301 Spiritual Formation of the Minister

D.Min. Seminar

Winter Trimester

January 11-13, 2010

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Description

The seminar delineates the sources, character, and dynamics of the spiritual formation of the Christian minister. Formation is viewed as a foundational ministry and as a reciprocal responsibility of pastor and congregation. It is vitally related to the quality of the congregation's worship and service and the integrity of the pastor's prophetic awareness. Combining trenchant analyses of contemporary religion and culture with insights and analyses from Scripture and the classics of Christian devotion, the study sets forth the classical spiritual disciplines as essential ingredients of authentic formation. The seminar constitutes an urgent call for spiritual maturity in Christian ministry and provides clear directives for achieving it.

Core Values Focused: Spiritual Vitality, Characteristic Excellence

Competencies Addressed: Spiritual and Character Formation

Objectives

Students successfully completing the seminar will demonstrate

- foundational understanding of Christian spirituality and its major paradigms;
- awareness of the critical significance of spiritual formation for the minister;
- capacity to identify and critique elements of contemporary religious culture that trivialize and distort Christian spirituality and impede spiritual formation;
- intentional and regular practice of disciplines contributing to Christian maturity;

- commitment to attentive reading, solid research, sound reasoning, and clear and substantive writing.

Requirements

Seminar texts. Purchase the following books:

- Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (NavPress, 2002). This is the basic seminar text.
- Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).
- Donald W. McCullough, *The Trivialization of God: The Dangerous Illusion of a Manageable Deity*. If you are unable to locate a copy of this book, you may select Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* or Eugene H. Peterson, *Subversive Spirituality* or J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*.
- Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995).
- Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (Harper & Row, 1988).

Willard's *Renovation*, McCullough (or a substitute), and Plantinga should be read prior to the first meeting of the seminar.

Selected Readings. The following readings are posted on the ProDoc website: *Knowing and Being Known, The Goal of the Christian Life, The Perils of the Preacher*. **Read these selections before the seminar convenes.**

Book Reviews. Prepare written reviews of McCullough (or a substitute) and Plantinga. The text of each review, composed of 10-12 double-spaced typewritten pages, should be written in an acceptable style, reflect serious study and analysis, and include the following sections: 1) biographical sketch of author, 2) author's purpose, 3) author's thesis or major arguments, 4) summary of contents, 5) significant teachings or insights, 6) quotable passages, 7) strengths and weaknesses, 8) contributions to Christian spirituality, and 9) concluding evaluation.

The reviews are due the first day of the seminar, Monday, January 11, 2010. The third review, a somewhat briefer critique (8-10 pages) of Foster, *Prayer*, is due Friday, January 22, 2010.

Interview. Interview an experienced and respected pastor on the theme of spiritual formation. Ask the pastor to

- define spirituality and spiritual formation and state the importance of spiritual

formation for the pastor

- identify marks of spiritual maturity
- indicate how spiritual maturity can be achieved
- note particular challenges or problems related to the spiritual formation of a pastor
- state how a pastor may facilitate spiritual formation of the congregation
- discuss how spiritual health shapes a pastor's priorities, perception of authority and power, leadership style, and the content and spirit of preaching and congregational worship

Prepare a written summary (8 pages) of the interview highlighting the most salient responses. Provide a brief concluding evaluation. **The written summary is due on Friday, January 29, 2010.**

Final Project. The final project is a paper (15-18 pages) on the spiritual disciplines. Use Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* as the primary (but not necessarily the only) source for the study. The first section of the paper should state the author's purpose and provide an overview of chapters 1-7 and 10-11. In the next section address chapters 8 and 9, identifying and discussing briefly each of the spiritual disciplines. The final section of the paper should give attention to the three disciplines you find to be the most challenging. Then indicate how you plan to incorporate these disciplines in your spiritual walk. **The paper is due on Friday, February 5, 2010.**

Values of Assignments

Interview	15%
Selected Readings	10%
Seminar Discussions	10%
Book Reviews	45% [15% each]
Final Project	20%

Seminar Schedule

Monday, January 11	1:00 - 9:00 PM
Tuesday, January 12	8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Wednesday, January 13	8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

