



Spiritual Formation of the Minister

Professional Doctoral Seminar – THCH8301/CEDI8301

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Spring Semester March 2-4, 2026.

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course 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.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students successfully completing the seminar will demonstrate:

- foundational understanding of Christian spirituality and its major paradigms;
- application of personal spiritual formation principles and practices by:
 - Journaling while practicing selected spiritual disciplines
 - Responding to reflection and application questions presented in the textbooks
 - Writing a personal spiritual growth plan
 - Identifying and presenting concepts and practices discerned from the assigned textbooks.

- ability to communicate the value and principles of spiritual formation in the local ministry context through writing an interview report, reflection paper, and personal growth plan.

Textbooks

NOTE: Not all textbooks will be required by each participant in the class. Some books are assigned to specific individuals or groups. Review the list of assignments before purchasing textbooks. Each student is to read the following textbooks and to be prepared to integrate their content into seminar discussions and presentations:

Required Texts:

Boa, Kenneth. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical, Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation.* Rev. Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020.

Foster, Richard J. and James Bryan Smith, eds. *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups.* Rev. edition. San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2005.
ISBN: 978-0060777500

You will be assigned one of the following classical texts. (read and report)

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together.* Use a good English translation

Brother Lawrence. *Practicing the Presence of God.* In *Christian Classics in Modern English.* Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1991 (ISBN: 0877881219).

DeSales, Francis. *Introduction to the Devout Life.* Augustine Institute - Ignatius Press, 2015.

Lewis, C. S. *Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer.* New York: HarperOne, 2017.

Liddell, Eric. *The Disciplines of the Christian Life.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985.

Müller, George. *A Life of Trust: George Müller in His Own Words, Rewritten in Everyday English.* Edited by David Harrison. Hagerstown, MD: Thrive! Books, 2025.

Nee, Watchman. *Sit, Walk, Stand.* Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977

Saint Augustine. *Confessions.* In *Christian Classics in Modern English.* Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1991 (ISBN: 0877881219).

Thomas à Kempis. *The Imitation of Christ.* In *Christian Classics in Modern English.* Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1991 (ISBN: 0877881219).

Thurman, Howard. *Meditations of the Heart.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2023.

You will be assigned one of the following contemporary or practical texts. (read and report)

Barton, R. Ruth. *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation.* Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Bockmuehl, Klaus. *Listening to the God Who Speaks: Reflections on God's Guidance from Scripture and the Lives of God's People.* Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1990.

Chandler, Diane J. *Christian Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014.

Issler, Klaus. *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2012. ISBN: 978-0830838110

Miller, Paul E. *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2017 (use latest edition).

Peterson, Eugene H. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*. 20th Anniversary Edition. Grand Rapids, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.

Scazzaro, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Witt, Lance. *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011.

Whitney, Donald. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Revised and updated. Foreword by J. I. Packer. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014.

Before the Seminar:

1. Primary Textbook Reading and Reflective Summary: Due February 15, 2026

You will read the primary textbooks in their entirety. Be prepared to participate in a dialog/conversation concerning the Boa and the Foster and Smith texts.

- a. As you read *Conformed to His Image*, consider the questions at the end of each chapter. Submit a paper detailing a thoughtful but laconic **Reflective Summary** of your responses to the questions (7-8 pages). The assignment will be confidential and seen only by the seminar faculty. Be prepared to participate in a class discussion about the content and personal reaction to the text. Parenthetical citations are acceptable. A header with Name, Assignment, Seminar, and Date may be substituted for the title page.
- b. Presentations: Each student will present the content and implications of a segment from *Devotional Classics* (Foster and Smith). Students will present the main ideas, ask relevant questions, and generate group dialogue. Use the time primarily for discussion rooted in reflection and application, not content. Assume that all students have read your book summary and expect responses. Assignments will be made by **December 10, 2025**.

2. Secondary Book Summaries:

Due February 22, 2026

You will complete a 2-page summary on each of the assigned secondary texts (a template will be supplied by the professor). Each summary should include suggestions for personal or corporate application in a local ministry context. Submit your Book Summaries in pdf format on Discussion Board in CANVAS by the due date.

Be prepared to present/share your summaries with the class. Be prepared for 10 minutes of presentation **and** discussion (as time allows). A survey asking for your preference will be sent to you after registration is closed. Respond to the survey ASAP. **Reading**

assignments will be made on or before December 10, 2025. Students are expected to read the summaries posted by other students prior to the seminar.

3. Interview: **Due: March 1, 2026**
Interview an experienced and respected minister (pastor, staff, chaplain, etc.) on the theme of spiritual formation. Prepare a written summary (3 pages) of the interview highlighting the most salient responses. Be prepared to discuss your conclusions during the seminar.

Ask the minister to:

- Define spirituality and state the value of spiritual formation for the minister
- Identify marks of spiritual maturity
- Describe the stage or season of life most impactful in spiritual growth
- Indicate how spiritual maturity can be achieved
- Ask about maintaining spiritual vitality in ministry (and failure to do so.)
- Note challenges or problems related to personal spiritual formation

4. Spiritual Formation Journal: **Due: April 26, 2026**
You are expected to keep a spiritual formation journal. A minimum of 5 entries per week is expected for at least 3 consecutive weeks between **January 20th and April 26th**. Entries should include spiritual insights based upon the selected reading assignments, personal devotional materials, and the practice of spiritual disciplines. Entries will not be reviewed by the faculty instructors but should be referenced in the assigned reflection paper (Assignment #10). You will self-report completion of this assignment in CANVAS.

During the Seminar:

- 5. Seminar Participation:** You are expected to be an active participant in all sessions of the seminar. Note: The seminar actually begins with the receipt of the syllabus and continues through the completion of the post seminar meeting assignments.
- 6. Discussion of the Primary Textbooks:** You are expected to demonstrate critical thinking and reflection through discussion of insights, questions, disagreements, comprehensions and criticisms of the primary textbooks.
- 7. Reports on Interviews:** You will report briefly on the interviews conducted in preparation for this seminar.
- 8. Group Presentations:** You will be placed into a small group and assigned topics from the *Devotional Classics* textbook to read and to present during class time. Assignments will be made by **December 10, 2025**. Students will be expected to present succinctly the main ideas, ask relevant questions, and generate group dialogue. Allow approximately 12-15 minutes for your group's presentation. (see assignment #1)
- 9. Presentations of the Secondary Textbooks:** Each student will present the summary of assigned secondary textbooks (either in pairs or small groups). The template for the summary is available in CANVAS. Allow approximately 10 minutes for your presentation and class discussion. Use the time for both content and concept dialogue.

Assume that students have read your book summary and solicit and encourage responses. (see assignment #2)

Following the seminar:

10. Reflection Paper -

Due: May 10, 2026

Submit a paper synthesizing the content and experience of this seminar. The paper, 6-7 pages in length, should utilize the data gathered from the interview (Assignment #4), personal practices and theological/theoretical concepts presented in class. The paper will have two sections, personal and corporate. (You are urged to formulate your content as you complete your course assignments.) *Address the following topics and questions in your paper.*

Personal:

- Compare the interview responses to the principles learned during this seminar.
- Which 3 disciplines are most impactful to **your** spiritual formation?
- Which spiritual discipline(s) do you most need to add to your lifestyle? Why?
- Which spiritual discipline seems to be the most difficult to continue in your life? Why?
- What insights about your spiritual walk or personal life did you discover?
- How does your own spiritual life influence the spiritual health of the congregation or leadership team?
- What disciplines should be emphasized more strongly in your congregation?

Corporate/Congregational:

- Suggest ways a minister may facilitate spiritual formation of the congregation.
- Discuss how spiritual health shapes a minister's priorities, leadership style, perception of authority and power, and the content and spirit of preaching/teaching and congregational worship.
- Offer suggestions how a minister can make spiritual formation a more integral part of local Christian ministry.

11. Final Project - Personal Growth Plan

Due: May 31, 2026

Design a one-year personal spiritual growth plan. Determine your spiritual formation weakness/needs and articulate specific goals to address them. (base on assignment #10) Include spiritual practices presented in class such as Bible reading, meditation, prayer, readings, group life, etc. Growth Plan will be personal and individual, so creativity is encouraged. Include a bibliography of texts to be read or used, cite websites, resources, etc.

Evaluation

Book Reading and Response	15%
Book Summaries 2@10	20%
Interview	15%
Journal (self-report)	10%
Reflection Paper	15%
Final Project (PGP)	<u>25%</u>
Total	100%

Class Schedule: (Subject to Change)

The seminar is scheduled to meet Monday, March 2, from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. (Central Standard Times); Tuesday, March 3, 8:00am to 4:00pm; and Wednesday, March 4, 8:00 to 4:00pm.

Monday

1:00 - 1:45pm	Introductions and Seminar Overview
1:45 – 2:45pm	Boa Text - Discussion
2:45 - 3:15pm	Break
3:15 - 4:45pm	Historical/Theological Backgrounds
4:45 - 5:15pm	Break
5:15 - 6:15pm	Interview Report Discussion
6:15 - 7:00pm	Conclusion, Presentation Preparation (dismiss)

Tuesday

8:00 - 8:30am	Devotion & Review
8:30 – 9:45am	<i>Devotional Classics</i> – Review and dialogue
9:45- 10:00am	Break
10:00 - 10:45am	<i>Devotional Classics</i> – Review and dialogue continued
10:45 – 11:45am	Chapel (Worship)
11:45 -1:00pm	Lunch
1:00 - 2:30pm	Spiritual Development Theory
2:30 - 2:45pm	Break
2:45 - 4:00pm	Book Reports - Contemporary

Wednesday

8:00 - 8:30 am	Devotion & Review
8:30 - 10:00am	Book Reports - Classic
10:00 -10:15am	Break
10:15 - 11:45am	Debrief, Discuss, and Apply
11:45 - 1:00pm	Lunch
1:00 - 2:30pm	Reflections, Observations & Discussion
2:30 - 3:30pm	Assessment and Application
3:30 - 4:00pm	Wrap up, unfinished business, follow up assignments.

Selected Bibliography

Barna, George. *Growing True Disciples*. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001.

Blackaby, Henry T. and Claude V. King. *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. Nashville: B & H, 1994.

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Bridges, Jerry. *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978.

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Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1993.

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Cymbala, Jim. *Break Through Prayer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

_____. *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.

DeSales, Francis. *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Augustine Institute - Ignatius Press, 2015.

Elliff, Tom. *A Passion for Prayer: Experiencing Deeper Intimacy with God*. Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2010.

Estep, James R. and Jonathan H. Kim, Eds. *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010

Floyd, Ronnie. *The Power of Prayer and Fasting*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997.

_____. *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Foster, Richard J. *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1992.

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_____. and Emilie Griffin. *Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.

Holt, Bradley P. *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*. 2d edition. Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2005.

Hughes, R. Kent. *Disciplines of a Godly Man*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2001.

Idleman, Kyle. *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Issler, Klaus. *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2012. ISBN: 978-0830838110

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MacArthur, John. *The Keys to Spiritual Growth: Unlocking the Riches of God*. Wheaton: Crossway, 1991.

McCullough Donald W. *The Trivialization of God: The Dangerous Illusion of a Manageable Deity*. Navpress Publishing Group, 1995.

McGrath, Alister. *Christian Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

Miller, Paul E. *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*. [New Edition]. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2017.

Muller, George. *The Autobiography of George Muller*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984.

Murray, Andrew. *Absolute Surrender*. Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1982.

_____. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*.

Nee, Watchman. *Sit, Walk, Stand*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977

Ortberg, John. *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

Packer, James I. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973.

Peterson, Eugene H. *Subversive Spirituality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

Plantinga, Cornelius, Jr. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.

Platt, David. *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*. Colorado Spring: Multnomah, 2010.

Scazzaro, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.

Shiflett, Diana. *Spiritual Practices in Community: Drawing Groups into the Heart of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018.

Stanley, Charles F. *Handle with Prayer: How to Turn the World Around While on Your Knees.* Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987.

Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life.* Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991.

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Wilkins, Michael J. *In His Image: Reflecting Christ in Everyday Life.* Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997.

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