

Western Seminary

Doctor of Ministry
PTS 752A
Dr. Dave Wyrzten
February 19-23, 2001

The Pastor and Intimacy with God—Living the Spiritual Life in the Pressure of Ministry

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

As ministers, we all agree that our spiritual life is our number one priority, but the grind of professional ministry can turn us into dispensers of truth without the internal reality to make it credible. This seminar will seek to expose the student to the life example and spiritual maturity of fellow believers in church history and the present. We will clarify the goal of our own spiritual journey, develop a strategy for reaching this goal, expose the major hindrances to our growth, and develop biblical means for overcoming these obstacles.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Students will evaluate their present commitment to their personal spiritual life.
- Students will network with ministry colleagues to strengthen their spiritual life.
- Students will expose and develop solutions to major hindrances to personal spiritual growth in the ministry.
- Students will evaluate different approaches to spiritual development in Christianity.
- Students will develop a personal plan for maintaining their own spiritual health.
- Students will mentor a younger believer in the spiritual disciplines of growth.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. Pre-residence Requirements:

Due: First meeting of the residence period.

Project 1: Evaluate your present commitment to personal spiritual growth, expose your present plan for maintaining spiritual health, analyze the major hindrances to your growth, and develop biblical strategies to overcome these obstacles. To complete this project answer the following questionnaire. You may reproduce the questionnaire on a word processor if you wish.

Spiritual Growth Questionnaire

1. What is your personal goal for your spiritual life? (Give biblical basis establishing this goal)
2. How are you moving toward this goal in your daily life?
Personal plan for time in the Word:

Personal plan for time in Prayer:

Personal plan for Worship

Personal plan for Accountability:

Personal plan for Renewal: (Reading, Retreats, Contact with Mentors, Times of Solitude, Etc.)
3. What specific hindrances to your spiritual growth have you encountered in the ministry? (Examples: Pride, Anger over failure of ministry to meet expectations, Financial pressures, Conflict with church leaders, Sexual temptations, Etc.)
4. What biblical strategies have you developed to overcome these hindrances?
5. Who are the mature believers who hold you accountable in the area of personal spiritual growth?

In what specific ways do they hold you accountable?
6. List the ten most helpful books you have read in the area of personal spiritual formation:

Project II: Think of ten men or women you admire in the ministry for their spiritual maturity. Send each of them a letter expressing that you are taking a course on the primacy of the minister's spiritual life and you want to learn from their expertise. Include in your letter a questionnaire with the six questions you answered in Project I above. Leave space for them to answer the questions and include a return stamped envelop. Send your personal letter, the questionnaire, and the return stamped envelop to your ten. Obviously, if some of your ten live in your city or town, you won't need to use the postal service.

Use the responses you receive to reevaluate and sharpen your own statement of purpose, strategies for growth, exposure of hindrances, and action plan for defeating hindrances. Be prepared to present and discuss your findings in class during the residence period.

Project III: Read approximately 2000 pages from books listed in the bibliography from the different categories of literature. For example read 250 pages of introduction to spiritual formation, such as Mulholland's *Invitation to a Journey*, 500 pages of biography such as Billy Graham's, *Just As I Am*, 300 pages of primary source material in the ancient classics, such as Augustine's *Confessions*, 300 pages in reformation tradition such as Jonathan Edwards, *On Religious Affections*, 500 pages in the novels, such as Howatch's *The Glittering Image*, and 150 pages on theology of spiritual formation, such as Schaeffer *True Spirituality*. From your reading be prepared to present and discuss in class insights you have gained about your personal spiritual growth from your reading.

Project IV: Read Philip Yancey's *What's So Amazing About Grace?* Come to the residence period prepared to discuss the primacy of God's grace in the practice of all spiritual disciplines.

B. Residence Requirements

1. Be prepared to discuss the primacy of grace in all our spiritual disciplines. We will use Philip Yancey's *What's So Amazing about Grace?* as the basis of our discussion.
2. Be prepared to present and discuss your results from Projects 1 and 2.
3. Be prepared to present and discuss your insights about the process of spiritual growth based upon your reading in Project 3.
4. We will interact with the different traditions of spiritual formation practiced in Christendom, and we will biblically evaluate their contributions to our personal spiritual growth.
5. You will begin to develop a personal model of spiritual formation to be graciously practiced in your personal life.

6. You will participate personally in disciplines of spiritual growth and in debriefing times with the group.
7. You will read Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water*. You will be prepared to discuss the six traditions of the spiritual life he presents—their strengths, their weaknesses, their contribution to Christ's family, and to your personal spiritual life.

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C. Post-Residence Requirements

Due: (Date set by Western Seminary for the completion of this course)

1. Complete your personal model for spiritual growth.
2. Put this model into practice keeping notes on your progress. Report on progress due at conclusion of this course.
3. Choose a biography of a mature believer you respect in history or contemporary Christian culture. Read the book and then write a five page paper presenting why you believe they progressed in spiritual growth and how you plan to learn from their example. (This is included in the 2000 pages in the pre-residence requirements)
 Example: Read Jonathan Edwards *Memoirs* noting the goal of his spiritual life, his disciplines in achieving this goal, his overcoming of hindrances, and how you can apply what you have learned to your own spiritual growth.
4. Choose a mature spiritual mentor who will hold you accountable spiritually. Meet with them at least once before the completion of the course. This can be done by phone if a personal meeting is not possible. Write a five page report presenting the biblical basis for spiritual direction from a mature leader, the importance of spiritually mentoring in growth, and evaluation of your interview with your spiritual mentor. Report is due no later than September 15, 1999.
5. Share the results of this course in your life with a younger believer. Begin to teach them what you have learned and help them to develop their own model for spiritual growth. Help them to implement the growth process. Send a one page report evaluating this time. Report due no later than September 15, 1999.

COURSE GRADE

The grade for the course will be determined according to the following percentages.

Pre-residence requirements (Completion of Projects I-IV, Preparation for Residence Discussion and Study)	40 %
Resident requirements (Preparation for and participation in class discussion, completion of reading, and participation in practical exercises)	30 %
Post-resident requirements (Completion of model for personal spiritual growth, implementation of model, Reports)	30 %

RESIDENCE SCHEDULE

Day	Topic
First Day	The Primacy of Grace in Spiritual Growth Discussion of Different Approaches to Spiritual Growth Biblical Evaluation of these Approaches
Second Day	Discussion of Purpose for Spiritual Growth Biblical Development of Purpose Discuss Personal Models for Spiritual Growth
Third Day	Discussion of Hindrances to Spiritual Growth Biblical Solutions to Hindrances and Practical Applications of Solutions
Fourth Day	Discuss Insights gained from reading in Project III Personal Time in Solitude and Implementation of Personal Model of Growth Debriefing time in class evaluating personal time with God Discussion of spiritual mentoring and accountability Biblical Basis for spiritual accountability
Fifth Day	Discussion of implementation of spiritual mentoring for yourself and your responsibility to aid younger believers in spiritual growth Evaluation of class

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Foster, Richard J. *Streams of Living Water—Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1998.

Yancey, Philip. *What's So Amazing about Grace?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997

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Publishers, 1992.

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Yancey, Philip. *What's So Amazing about Grace?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997

Ancient Classics:

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Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God.*

Benedict, Saint. *The Rule of St. Benedict.*

deWaal, Esther. *Seeking God the Way of St. Benedict.*

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Reformation Heritage:

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