



Spiritual Formation

The Corporate Dimensions of Spirituality

Programmed Syllabus

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Syllabus

Course Description

What is spirituality? How is it formed in private and in community? This course explores the meaning of Biblical Christianity and its relation to faith and practice within contemporary cultural contexts, giving special attention to the corporate dimensions of spirituality and spiritual formation as defined in the New Testament. The lectures analyze and discuss those historical and cultural factors that have led to the privatization of Christianity, and develop a paradigm of spiritual growth and maturity that focuses on the assembly rather than the individual.

Course Purpose

The primary overarching competency to be achieved in graduate theological education is the development of spirituality in each student. Seminary graduates should be persons of faith. The primary allegiance of their lives should be to Christ as He is revealed in Scripture. The Christian life is a personal response to the personal activity of God in His redemptive self-disclosure. This means that one's loyalty to Christ affects the full range of one's values and decisions. Loyalty to Christ in a personal relationship is set within the framework of the community of the redeemed. The common allegiance of this community is to its head, Christ, who ministers His grace for the spiritual development of His people through the interdependent functions of His body by means of Word and Spirit.

Faith should be lived out in every facet of life. Spirituality is the description of the quality of the believer's life whereby the new disposition is expressed in spontaneous reconstruction of God's preceptive will. It includes the character traits that result from the swift and sure use of one's will to will God's will. Spirituality is that quality in the believer which causes him or her to have a greater desire for and joy in prayer, Bible study, worship, and Christian service than a desire for and joy in wealth, power, sex, fame, or success.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Understand the basic, biblical concept of spirituality as contrasted to contemporary ideas.
2. Understand the basic mystic teachings of Christian spirituality, which have developed through the history of the church.



Syllabus

3. Recognize the influences of mystical spirituality in contemporary ideas relating to spiritual formation.
4. Understand the basic theological foundations of evangelical spirituality as these have developed through the history of the church.
5. Develop a functional definition of spiritual formation.
6. Recognize the impact of psychology on contemporary culture and spiritual formation.
7. Understand the biblical concepts of spiritual maturity, spiritual growth, and love.
8. Appreciate the corporate and community aspects of spiritual formation.
9. Apply basic biblical concepts to the process of spiritual formation within his/her own life.
10. Distinguish between the main traditions of spiritual formation.
11. Appreciate the need for the spiritual disciplines in the development of spirituality.
12. Understand the role of theological education in the spiritual formation of ministry students.
13. Recognize the need for a personal value set that reflects loyalty and commitment to Christ over the enticements of the world, flesh, and devil.

Course Texts

1. Required Reading

Alexander, Donald L. *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Johnson, S. *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

Willard, D. *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.



Syllabus

2. Recommended Reading

Historical Backgrounds

Dieter, M. et al. *Five Views on Sanctification*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.

Jones, C. et al. *The Study of Spirituality*. New York: Oxford, 1986

Magill, F. and McGreal, I. *Christian Spirituality: The Essential Guide to the Most Influential Spiritual Writings of the Christian Tradition*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.

Mysticism/Contemplative Spirituality

Corduan, W. *Mysticism: An Evangelical Option?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.

McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Mysticism*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

Merton, T. *The Ascent to Truth*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951.

Tuttle, R. *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology

Banks, R. *Paul's Idea of Community*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Hagberg, J. and Guelich, R. *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*. Dallas: Word, 1989.

McFadyen, A. *The Call To Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Spiritual Disciplines

Bonhoeffer, D. *The Way to Freedom*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Foster, R. *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.



Syllabus

Willard, D. *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

General Works

Bonhoeffer, D. *Life Together*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1954.

----- *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: MacMillan, 1934.

Steele, L. *On the Way: A Practical Theology of Christian Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Whether you sit in a traditional classroom or study from a distance, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 10.3.3.3; 10.3.4.3). In order to meet this need in distance theological education, ITS is developing structures and resources to encourage spiritual formation and community interaction in our courses. In this course, we have included three collaborative learning features:

1. [ITS Online Interactivity Forum](#) (see course requirements) – fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students)
2. [Spiritual Formation Project](#) (see course requirements) – fosters mentor-to-learner interaction in a mentor-guided reflection, discussion and application (required for all students)
3. [Learning Community Assignments](#) (see end of syllabus) – fosters peer-to-peer collaboration in a group approach to assignments (optional but recommended where possible)

Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ for the most up-to-date ITS resources.

Course Requirements

I. Reading

A. Read the text by Alexander, *Christian Spirituality*, according to the schedule given in the Assignments section of this syllabus. Write a **five-to-eight page** report comparing and contrasting the five views according to the following criteria:

1. Discuss those aspects of each view which you feel set it apart from the other four views and make it unique. Explain the significance of the aspect within the view it represents and discuss fully why this aspect makes the view unique from the others.



Syllabus

2. In a final section of the paper, discuss which, if any, of the five views have common features with respect to the actual issue of spiritual formation. (You are not interested here in the obvious commonality of theology underlying all of that, which calls itself evangelical.) Describe the common feature(s) and discuss their significance within the related views.
- B. Read the text by Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, according to the schedule given in the Assignment section of this syllabus. Prepare a **five-to-eight page** written report in which you evaluate this book. Organize your report according to the points discussed below.
1. Discuss the concept of "life" and its significance with respect to spiritual formation as presented by Willard. How has his presentation of this concept affected your own thinking concerning spiritual formation?
 2. Describe the role that spiritual disciplines should play in the development of spirituality. Analyze Willard's approach in terms of its relative emphasis on the individual versus the corporate aspects of spiritual formation.
 3. Explain where Willard "fits" in terms of the five views presented in Alexander's book. Defend your choice.
- C. Read the book by Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, according to the schedule given in the Assignment section of this syllabus. Prepare a written report describing and evaluating this book using the Reading Report Format provided below. The report should be **six-to-eight pages** in length.

II. Evaluation

- A. Study Guide Questions: At the back of the Study Guide there are review questions corresponding to each recorded lecture. You may prepare written answers to these questions and submit them for feedback prior to writing any of the evaluation instruments listed below. The feedback will be formative in nature and not involve a grade factor. Grade factors related to the recorded lectures will be based upon your performance on each of the instruments listed below (items B, C, D).
- B. Examination One: Complete the first examination after you have finished *Lecture 9*. The examination will cover only the material covered in the



Syllabus

recorded lectures. During the writing of the examination you are not allowed to refer to notes, texts, or other supplementary material. You *may* refer to and use the Bible during the exam.

- C. Examination Two: Complete the second examination after you have finished *Lecture 17*. The examination will cover only the material covered in the recorded lectures. During the writing of the examination you are not allowed to refer to notes, texts, or other supplementary material. You *may* refer to and use the Bible during the exam.
- D. 1 Corinthians 13 Application: Using any five of the characteristics developed in Lectures 18-24, write a paper explaining what specific programs, steps, etc., that you would initiate to help develop the positive aspects of the characteristics you have chosen in a given ministry context. At the beginning of the project briefly describe the ministry context to which you are making application. The paper should focus on specific and concrete suggestions for implementation and should not simply be a restatement of the material in the Lectures (although it should be consistent with this material). The paper should be **ten to twelve pages** in length.

III. Reflection

- A. ITS Online Interactivity Forum: Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics.

Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ to register for and enter the ITS On-Line Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment **after** you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ◆ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
- ◆ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
- ◆ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

NOTE: Please read the “Assignment Instructions” in the Forum for details.



Syllabus

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.

B. Spiritual Formation Project

RATIONALE: Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

1. **Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.
 - a. Follow these steps in your reflection:
 - Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?
 - Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?
 - Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?
 - Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?
 - b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)
 - c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).



Syllabus

2. Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor* – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)

1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: ***Identify your mentor early in the course***, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

- ♦ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
- ♦ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
- ♦ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions* – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:

a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.



Syllabus

- b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
- ♦ What were the mentor's comments regarding your essay?
 - ♦ What advice did he/she give?
 - ♦ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
 - ♦ Include the person's name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
- c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
- ♦ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your "Personal Reflection and Evaluation", how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - ♦ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor's insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
 - ♦ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

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Guidelines for Mentors

(Students, give this sheet to your mentor for the Spiritual Formation Project.)

Thank you for your involvement in this student's ITS coursework. We believe the Christian life is more than an academic exercise, so we encourage students to critically reflect on their life in light of what they learn and then apply those insights to the daily life of faith.

Therefore, students taking ITS courses are required to complete a final assignment called the "*Spiritual Formation Project*." This assignment involves two parts: an **essay** and an **interview**:

The ESSAY: After completing their coursework, students reflect on the content of the course, evaluate their lives, and discuss the **one** theme, principle or concept that is most significant to them and why. Students are to identify specific ways this theme/principle/concept should apply to their lives and what action steps they plan to take in order to make these changes a reality.

The INTERVIEW: After writing this reflection, students give a copy to their mentor and meet with him/her to discuss their thoughts and get feedback. **The goal of this interview is to facilitate the student's growth through interaction with a mature believer.**

NOTES ON THE INTERVIEW:

- ◆ You do **not** need to be familiar with the course to participate in this interview. You will primarily respond to the thoughts of the student. (However, general knowledge of the subject matter of the course and/or experience applying it to ministry is valuable.)
- ◆ Prior to meeting with the student, read his/her "Personal Reflection and Evaluation" and prepare to discuss the following:
 1. What feedback can you give the student in response to his/her essay?
 2. Are the student's conclusions from the course appropriate? Why or why not?
 3. What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications would you suggest from your own life and ministry?
- ◆ Meet with the student either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do not use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc.).
- ◆ Suggested length of the interview: 45 minutes

Thanks again for participating in this project! You have a real opportunity to guide this student in the application process and to help him/her connect academics to life – a *valuable process for all who wish to grow in Christ.*

NOTE: If the student's school makes any changes to this assignment, their requirements should replace those described here.



Syllabus

Format for Reading Reports

1. Bibliographic Data.

In a style from APA, American Psychological Association or other "new" scientific or technical journal, e.g.:

Simkins, Tim. *Nonformal Education and Development*. Manchester, England: University of Manchester, 1977.

or

Colleta, Nat J. "Participatory Research or Participation Put-Down," *Convergence*. Vol. IX, No.3, 1976.

If available, also include purchasing and ordering data for books, e.g.: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545 (paper \$4.95)

2. Purpose of the Author.

Why was the book or article written? Often the writer specifically gives his purpose for writing. In other cases you will have to infer his or her purpose.

3. Highlights.

What two to five propositions, questions or conclusions best represent what the book or article is about? (For an article or chapter of a book this section can be brief.)

4. Critical Commentary.

From your viewpoint what could or should be said about strengths and weaknesses of the material? What questions are well answered? What new questions are raised?

5. Notable Quotations.

One or two for an article; five to ten for a book. Select things you may want to directly quote in a paper that you might write later.



Syllabus

Course Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be based upon the following percentages:

Reading Reports	30%
Alexander	10%
Johnson	10%
Willard	10%
Reflection	15%
ITS Online Interactivity Forum	5%
Spiritual Formation Project	10%
Exams	40%
Midterm	20%
Final.....	20%
1 Corinthian 13 Application	<u>15%</u>
	100%



Syllabus

Course Outline

- I. Spirituality: What Is It?
 - A. Spirituality - A Problem in Definition
 - B. Secular Spirituality
 - C. Biblical Spirituality

- II. Spirituality and Maturity
 - A. *Teleios* - A Lexical Study
 - B. Biblical Concepts of Maturity and Growth

- III. A Paradigm for Spiritual Formation
 - A. Ephesians 4:11-16
 - B. Spirituality and Love
 - C. Christianity Without Love
 - D. Love, the Essence of the Christian Experience

- IV. The Church: Decisive Context for Spiritual Formation
 - A. The Church as the People of God.
 - B. The Church as Event.
 - C. The Church as Family
 - D. The Church and the Spirit.
 - E. The Church as Redemptive Community.

- V. Contemporary Factors: The "Psycho-Culture"
 - A. Ethical Egoism
 - B. Psychotherapy
 - C. Individualism
 - D. Feminist Ideology

- VI. Historical Factors: Mystical Spirituality
 - A. Mystical Spirituality
 - B. Evangelical Devotion
 - C. The Mystical Elements of Biblical Faith
 - D. Areas of Tension

- VII. Individual Disciplines

- VIII. Corporate Disciplines



Syllabus

NOTE: The instructional objectives included below are intended to describe the level of learning you should achieve through interaction with the recorded material as well as the specific outcome you should manifest to demonstrate the achievement of that level of learning.

For the most part, the readings in this independent study are intended to complement the recorded lectures rather than supplement them. That is, the readings are given to accomplish other course goals in addition to those realized through the recorded lectures. Hence the majority of the reading schedule given in the Programmed Syllabus is intended to assist you in allocating your time and study for accomplishing the requirements of the course. Unless noted specifically in the Syllabus, do not expect the readings to supplement or correspond in content to the particular lecture under which they are listed.



Syllabus

Notes Regarding This Downloaded Syllabus

This downloadable syllabus is not exhaustive. It is designed to provide learners with a picture of the course, not a full outline of the course. Grader Guidelines, Appendixes, Bibliographies, Lecture Outlines, and Review Questions have been removed. The complete course syllabus is included with purchase of the course in either a digital or hard-copy format.

Likewise, individuals taking the class for credit are responsible for the syllabus requirements of the specific institution through which the course is offered. Each individual institution has reserved the right to alter or change the syllabus as deemed necessary.