



# The Christian Life: An Evangelical Spiritual Theology

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## Syllabus

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## Course Description

With the contemporary interest in spirituality, it is imperative that the Church establish a comprehensive theology of Christian spirituality that can inform the life and witness of Christian believers. This course presents such a theology of spirituality: a theology that is Biblical, practical, and contemporary, accounting for and enabling spiritual formation and nurture in a post-modern, pluralistic, materialistic society. In addition, the course provides a theological foundation for a life of prayer that will empower and sustain the believer in life and ministry.

## Course Objectives

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

1. Have a thorough understanding of the biblical and historical foundations of Christian spirituality.
2. Appreciate the diversity of theological traditions in Christian spirituality - particularly the Reformed, Wesleyan and Roman Catholic - but in particular understand the stream that has shaped their own experience (that is, their own denominational heritage).
3. Understand the theology of spirituality adequately such that he or she is able to develop a practical model of spiritual formation within congregational life.
4. Develop a model of spiritual life and discipline that has theological consistency but also practical application to one's own life and witness.

## Course Text

Lovelace, Richard. *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

### 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/](http://www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/) for the most up-to-date ITS resources.



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## Course Requirements

*Each student is expected to listen carefully to all 24 lectures for this course. Reflection questions are given for each lecture, yet the student is NOT required to answer these questions. They are given to assist in higher levels of thinking and interaction as well as assist in the completion of the assignments required.*

### 1. Book Reviews:

Each student will write **two** book reviews. One will deal with the course textbook, and the other can be from any source contained in the course bibliography. Each report should total no more than five (5) pages. This report should be a true critical evaluation and a personal response rather than simply a summary of content.

### 2. Evaluation of a Spiritual Heritage:

Each student will write a critical evaluation of the spiritual heritage from his/her particular denomination. Therefore, a student from a Wesleyan tradition would examine his/her own heritage. The critical review would answer **two components**: 1) The historical origins of the spiritual tradition and 2) The contemporary application or expression of that particular spiritual tradition. The student should identify the distinctive features and strengths as well as the limitations or weaknesses of the particular tradition. The student should also describe how this tradition is expressed today. Listening carefully to the lectures and taking time to reflect upon the questions after each lecture will greatly assist in the completion of this project. The body of this essay should be no more than **ten (10) pages** in length. The better essays will include some documented external research.

### 3. Textual Study:

Each student will choose one of the following passages of Scripture for a textual study project.

- Ephesians 4 (Church Ministry)
- Romans 6 (Personal Sanctification)
- I Timothy 3 (Church Leadership)

The student will analyze the passage chosen and identify the key themes related to a theology of the Christian life. The student will then make specific applications from these texts to his/her program of spiritual formation. The purpose of this assignment is to make sure that the student is grounding his/her theology of the Christian life in Scripture rather than simply giving opinions. The student should include correlations from both the Old and New Testaments relevant to his/her chosen text. The study should be more in-depth than just a surface reflection. Original language work is not required but could be of benefit to the student who is able to do so. This report should not exceed **eight (8) pages** in length.



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## 4. Program of Spiritual Formation for a Local Church:

Each student will formulate a platform of spiritual formation for a particular local church. This program should take account of the course lectures and other reading. The model of formation developed should make practical application of the theology of the Christian life. The model should be developed out of a theological rationale and should demonstrate theological consistency. The student should consider a variety of issues when articulating his/her program. Some are as follows: 1) Does the program appropriately outline duties for church leadership and volunteers? 2) Is the program age appropriate? 3) Does the program address traditional spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and discipleship? 4) Does the program meet true needs of people? The student should articulate his/her plan for this program in essay form. Careful attention to the lectures and the reflection questions following each lecture is crucial for understanding and completing this assignment. The body of this essay should be no more than **twelve (12) pages** in length. Though this program is to be developed by the student, the better essays will include some documented external research, especially to ensure theological consistency.

## 5. Reflective Essay:

Each student will write a reflective essay describing his/her own spiritual experience. The description of his/her spiritual experience should include: a description of their own conversion experience, their current practice of spiritual disciplines, a critical evaluation of their spiritual life, and a plan of action for their own spiritual development. This essay should take full account of the lectures and reading. It should be no more than **eight (8) pages** in length.

## 6. ITS Online Interactivity Forum:

Each student will participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics. Go to [www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/](http://www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/) to register for and enter the ITS Online Interactivity 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.**

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.



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## 7. 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).

Each student will write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on his/her life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader at the end of the course. 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).
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.



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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.

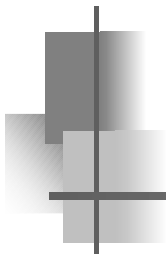
NOTE: **Identify your mentor early in the course**, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

- 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.
- 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?



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- ◆ 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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## Course Grading

The grade for the course shall be determined by the following:

1. Book Reviews .....	20% (10% each)
2. Spiritual Heritage Evaluation.....	20%
3. Program of Spiritual Formation for a Local Church .....	20%
4. Textual Study .....	15%
5. Reflective Essay .....	10%
6. ITS Online Interactivity Forum .....	5%
7. Spiritual Formation Project .....	10%
	100%



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## Course Outline

### Part 1: Theological and Historical Foundations

Lesson 1: Evangelical Spirituality: An Historical Overview (Lectures 1, 2, 3, and 4a)

Lesson 2: True Spirituality as Knowing and Loving the Triune God (Lectures 4b and 5)

Lesson 3: Thinking Christianly About the Self (Lectures 6 and 7a)

Lesson 4: The Theological Logic of the Christian Life (Lectures 7b, 8, and 9)

Lesson 5: Spiritual Theology and Christian Community (Lectures 10 and 11)

Lesson 6: The Essential Foundation: A Thorough Conversion (Lectures 12 and 13)

### Part 2: Themes in an Evangelical Spirituality

Lesson 1: Prayer and Discernment (Lectures 14, 15, and 16)

Lesson 2: The Christian in the World: Mission, Vocation, Work, Leisure (Lectures 17 and 18)

Lesson 3: With Heart and Mind: The Christian Mind; The Christian Heart (Lectures 19 and 20)

Lesson 4: Sexuality, Gender, and Christian Spirituality (Lecture 21)

Lesson 5: Suffering and the Christian Life (Lecture 22)

Lesson 6: Spiritual Formation and the Disciplines of the Spiritual Life (Lectures 23 and 24)



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## 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.