

COURSE SYLLABUS

Discipleship in Community: Spiritual Formation and the Church

Course Lecturer: John R. Lillis, PhD

Dean and Executive Officer at Bethel Seminary (San Diego, CA)

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 Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the basic, biblical concept of spirituality as contrasted to contemporary ideas.
- Understand the basic mystic teachings of Christian spirituality, which have developed through the history of the church.
- Recognize the influences of mystical spirituality in contemporary ideas relating to spiritual formation.
- Understand the basic theological foundations of evangelical spirituality as these have developed through the history of the church.
- Develop a functional definition of spiritual formation.
- Recognize the impact of psychology on contemporary culture and spiritual formation.
- Understand the biblical concepts of spiritual maturity, spiritual growth, and love.
- Appreciate the corporate and community aspects of spiritual formation.
- Apply basic biblical concepts to the process of spiritual formation within your own life.
- Distinguish between the main traditions of spiritual formation.
- Appreciate the need for the spiritual disciplines in the development of spirituality.
- Understand the role of theological education in the spiritual formation of ministry students.

- 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 Lecturer



John R. Lillis, PhD

Education:

- Michigan State University, PhD
- Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, MDiv
- Air Force Institute of Technology, MS
- University of Kentucky, BS

Teaching Career:

- Dean and Executive Officer, Bethel Seminary
- Multiple positions at Cornerstone University, including:
 - Provost and Executive Vice President
 - Taught Christian education and spiritual formation at the university's seminary
 - Dean and Director of Continuing Education, Grand Rapids Theological Seminary (GRTS), the graduate seminary of Cornerstone University (1990s)
 - Professor of Christian Education and Missions, GRTS (1982-1990)
 - Impact Ministry Supervisor, GRTS (1978-1981)
- Various capacities including a stint as President, Asian Baptist Theological Seminary in Bangkok, Thailand and Manila, the Philippines (1982-1990)
- Visiting faculty member, Columbia International University and Marquette University
- Teacher of physics, Calvin College (1976-1982, 1986-1987)
- Visiting professor of Comparative Religion, Mahidol University in Thailand (1982-1984)

Other Career Highlights:

- Pastor in the United States and abroad
- Major in the Michigan Air National Guard
- Captain in the United States Air Force as a nuclear research officer
- Educational consultant for the United African American Ministerial Action Council (UAAMAC)
- Blue Ribbon Committee Member for the American Red Cross in San Diego

Publications:

- Numerous scholarly articles and papers on various subjects from theology to nuclear physics to education to leadership, including "Preparation for Missionary Candidates," "Teaching Electromagnetism: A Conceptual Approach for Developing Countries," "Nontraditional Approaches to Theological Education," and "Values for Leadership."

Recommended Reading

Though not required, you may choose to read the textbooks shown below to supplement your learning. 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.

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.

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.

Textbooks can be ordered through your local bookstore, various online bookstores, or through your preferred eReader when available.

Course Methods

The lecture content for each lesson is provided in two easy-to-use formats: audio and PDF text (if available). Students can choose the medium (or combination of media) that most closely aligns with their individual learning styles.

Course Assessment and Requirements

To earn a Certificate of Completion, you must complete the course requirements. Course requirements include:

1. Viewing the following for each lesson:
 - **Lesson Objectives:** Objectives describe the learning outcomes you should achieve by the end of the lesson.
 - **Reading:** Suggested readings that will supplement your learning.
 - **Lectures:** 45-minute lessons that can be viewed as many times as needed.
2. Completing a final self-assessment form in which you will reflect on the content in the course and evaluate your life in light of what you have learned. The specifics of this assessment are provided in the course materials.

Course requirements noted in this syllabus will be validated before a Certificate of Completion is awarded to any student.