

**MIN 694 Advanced Topics:  
Theological Foundations for Missional Leadership**

Steve Argue, M.Div.  
Dave Livermore, Ph.D.  
Intersect  
P.O. Box 28675  
Grand Rapids, MI 49516  
616.516.0558 mobile  
[steve@intersectcommunity.com](mailto:steve@intersectcommunity.com)

3 credit hours

**Course Description:** This course will encourage students to think about the relationship between their theological frameworks with how they live and minister in their respective contexts. The course will encourage participants to examine their lives and ministries in light of God's Redemptive Story and the emphasis will be upon helping students to see the essential role of theological, personal, missional, and contextual considerations for effective ministry. By the end of the course, students will have developed a comprehensive ministry plan. The reading materials and assignments are intended to inform students practice as well as to challenge them to engage in theological praxis, that is reflective thought in action where they live and minister.

**Objectives.** Because of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Identify and explore some of the important leadership issues related to ministering effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- 2) Ground their approach to life and ministry in light of sound, theological convictions. Students will integrate the necessary connections between theological conviction and ministry.
- 3) Use critical reflection skills to study and improve their ability to minister theologically and relevantly alike.
- 4) Identify and describe their theological convictions as they pertain to when to reflect culture and when to transform it.
- 5) Further refine their theological orientation to ministry as lived out in context.

**Readings:**

**To be Completed by the August 2007 Cohort Gathering:**

Wright, N.T. (2001). *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering who Jesus was and is*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

**To be completed by the January 2008 Cohort Gathering:**

McKnight, S. (2004). *The Jesus Creed*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press. 2004.

Webber, Robert. *Ancient-Future Faith, Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*. Baker Books, Grand Rapids. 1999

**To be completed by the May 2008 Cohort Gathering:**

Newbigin, L. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Eerdmans. Grand Rapids. 1989.

One additional reading to be confirmed.

**Additional Readings:**

Argue, S.C. & Livermore, D.A. (2002-2007). Selected Articles as assigned throughout the cohort.

### **Recommended Readings:**

- Buckinham, M., & D.O. Clifton. (2001). *Now Discover Your Strengths*. New York: Free Press.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy & Foster Ron. *The Godbearing Life, The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. Upper Room Books, Nashville. 1998
- Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Practicing Passion, Youth and the Quest for Passionate Church*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids. 2004
- Guder, Darrell L, *Missional Church. A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids. 1998
- Guder, Darrell L. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. Eerdmans. Grand Rapids. 2000.
- Livermore, David L. *Serving With Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*. Baker. Grand Rapids. 2006.
- Nouwen, Henri J.M. *In the Name of Jesus, Reflections of Christian Leadership*. Crossroad, New York. 1999
- Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Beacon Press, Boston. 1976
- Webber, Robert. *The Younger Evangelicals, Facing the Challenges of the New World*. Baker Books, Grand Rapids. 2002.

### **Course Requirements:**

1. Reflection Papers: (30%) Students will write four reflection papers, each four to five pages in length. The papers will be in response to the assigned readings and class discussions that accompany the five meeting blocks of the course (as listed in the course schedule below). Papers should not be a summary of the material read and discussed. Rather, they should discuss the relevance of the material to the participant's practice with adolescents. Participants may discuss the relevance of the readings holistically or may choose to focus upon one particular author and/or issue raised. The discussion should not be broad and ambiguous but should zero in on specific issues.

In this assignment you are to write a reflective learning papers that focus on what you are learning about the theological foundations of missional leadership and how this material might be used to address specific areas of concern with youth ministry that are of particular interest for you.

These papers are expected to be approximately four to five pages in length, double-spaced, and in 12 point Times Roman font, and using APA style.

Reflection papers are due **one week** prior to each cohort gathering.

#### **Statement of the problem**

These papers will be directed towards an area of concern within youth ministry that is of interest to you and that relates to theological foundations of missional leadership. In describing this area, you should a) identify what it is; b) what makes it important for you and the field; and c) in what ways do you understand it to reflect issues of concern theological foundations of missional leadership.

This statement of the problem may reflect a ministry, educational, social, or leadership issue in youth ministry. If you would like feedback on the formulation of this "statement of the problem," you may forward it to me via email and I will provide whatever feedback may be appropriate.

#### **Re-theorizing the problem**

In the reflective papers, you will provide a brief account of the statement of the problem. Then, reflecting on what we have covered so far in the course, reflect on this problem within the context of the material studied. Given this material, how do you now understand the problem and, given this understanding, what implications for addressing the problem are suggested by this material.

2. Class Participation and Online Discussion: (20%) The course will be very interactive and will involve a great deal of group participation. Completion of the assigned readings and corresponding papers, and active involvement in the course will be considered in

the determination of the grade given. We will also use an online learning platform to augment the learning experiences for this course. This website will include discussion forums that target specific topics of our study. You will be expected to post on a regular basis (frequency to be agreed upon) with your own post or a response. For posts to count toward this course expectation, they need to be substantive in nature (i.e. more than one sentence!). Your postings should attempt to integrate both your experiences and our readings and discussions around the specific topics and questions we are pursuing. Online postings will serve as our ongoing dialogue between cohort gatherings.

**3. Lesson Plans:** (25%) Following each module, participants will write up and present the essence of the module's content to a team of people in their ministry (students, adult leaders, parents, etc.). Lesson plans must be taught in some context of their ministry. Lesson plans will include a one-page summary of the student's experience and include evaluations from participants.

**4. Final Project:** (25%) In 25-30 pages, write up a ministry pathway for your ministry in light of each of the 4 modules of the course. The final project should reflect readings, course discussion, online chat, and feedback from the participants lesson plans and be a body of material that will be useful for training in their ministry. The project will include participant pages and leader' notes. The Final project is due by Friday, May 20, 2008.

**Student Evaluation:** The final grade will be determined in light of the proportions indicated next to the assignments above.

### **Additional Important Things**

#### **Grading**

Each assignment will be given a letter grade. Remember that an "A" really represents outstanding work. A "B" grade is still above average and a "C" grade represents average work.

Also note that in order to comply with the Privacy Act concerning students' records; graded papers/exams will not be left in offices or other designated areas for returning to students. Papers will be returned in class.

#### **Late Work**

Any work turned in after the due date will not be counted. If you make a reasonable effort to let me know of an extenuating circumstance, there is grace, but excuses the day of or after, are too late and credit will not be given. Use your time wisely and love the class as much as I love it.

#### **Inclusive Language and Writing Expectations**

Inclusive language should be used with reference to human communities. "Man," "men," "he/his" are to be used when they clearly refer to (solely) male referents, not for mixed or indeterminate referents. Use "person," "people," or "he and she"/"his and/or her." *This refers to classroom dialogue as well as writing.* For further suggestions with regard to gender-sensitive writing, see: Casey Miller and Kat Swift, *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing*.

Except where noted, all papers should have subheadings within the paper for organization, be typed, size 12 characters, double-spaced, paginated, 1" margins, and

error free.

**Student Plagiarism**

All projects and papers turned in by students must be original work. Students who turn in work that is copied from other students, the Internet, or published materials, without proper notations, will be reported to the Registrar's office and subject to failing the class.

**Disability Accommodation**

The University will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in compliance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act 1990. See the University catalog for further explanation.

Students asking for disability accommodation should identify themselves to the professor or to Dr. Stephen Neynaber in the Cornerstone Learning Center at the beginning of the semester.

## EXPLORE OVERVIEW...

### Setting the Course

explore...to search or travel for the purpose of discovery.

**”Explore describes our lifelong journey of discovery where we continue to seek to know God and know ourselves in relation to him.**

This is a series of four Explore modules. Our objective through these learning encounters is to intersect our lives and ministries with what God has done, is doing, and will do globally.

We believe longevity in ministry depends upon whole leaders who grow in the disciplines of theological reflection, personal reformation, missional expression, and contextual awareness. The four EXPLORE modules are developed to nurture growth in those four areas:

Explore 01. REFLECT: Nurturing the discipline of theological reflection

Explore 02. FORM: Nurturing the discipline of personal transformation

Explore 03. EXPRESS: Nurturing the discipline of missional expression

Explore 04. ADAPT: Nurturing the discipline of contextual adaptation

#### Our Assumptions about Ministry Formation:

1. We believe learning happens best in community.
2. We believe learning happens best when reflection is combined with hands-on ministry.
3. We believe ministry training is best done when theological, personal, missional, and contextual formation is all nurtured in the same learning community.
4. We believe there is a need for both macro-level training material that looks at the biblical narrative in light of our current context and for micro-level training that deals with day-to-day leadership tasks.

### Course Outline and Tentative Schedule:

#### Template for each of the 4 gatherings...

DAY 01	1:00 Arrival/Check in 1:30 Training, Dialogue, Discussion 5:30 A meal together 7:30 An evening together, discussion and coffee
DAY 02	8:30 Training, Dialogue, Discussion 12:00 Lunch 1:30 Personal reflection, thinking and writing 5:30 A meal together 7:30 An evening together
DAY 03	8:30 Summarizing, setting goals, discussing next steps 11:30 Head Home

**01. REFLECT: Nurturing the discipline of theological reflection**

**Theological Reflections...**My Perspective of God and His Redemptive Plan

This is not an abstract, objective discipline that is subject to reason, logic, or science. It's a communal reflection on God's mission that arises out of God's People as they seek to discern God's work in history and his present action in the life of the community.

**02. FORM: Nurturing the discipline of personal transformation**

**Personal Transformation...**My Heart and Inner World

True spirituality is the process of becoming human individually and corporately. It is not exclusively the spiritual disciplines though they are included. True personal formation motivates us to participate in God's current, redemptive movement.

**03. EXPRESS: Nurturing the discipline of missional expression**

**Missional Expression...**My Relationships and Actions

All our practice is affected by a missiological understanding of the church. We are individually and corporately to be the active presence of Christ in the world. There is no aspect of our personal lives nor our ministry plans that are not connected to God's mission to reverse the curse on God's creatures and creation.

**04. ADAPT: Nurturing the discipline of contextual adaptation**

**Contextual Awareness...**My Relevant Embodiment of Christ

Our theological reflection, our personal formation, and our embodiment of God's mission takes place within a particular time and place. Our awareness of the cultural dynamics surrounding us will inform our ability to form communities which are relevantly countercultural.

<b>Theological Reflections...</b> <b>My Perspective of God and His Redemptive Plan</b>	<b>Personal Formation...</b> <b>My Heart and Inner World</b>
<p><u>Theology.</u> It's the study and pursuit of God. It's our worldview. And so our theology shapes the way we live and minister. And our lives and ministries in turn, shape our theology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who is God? What does he care about? Who am I in relationship to God? Our response to these kinds of questions reflects our theological convictions.</li> <li>Jesus theology was rooted in a "holy-other God". He was obsessed with making the Father known. Jesus didn't come to start something new. He practiced his theology in the wineskins of his historical context.</li> </ul> <p>Our most important role with students is not as programming experts, big buddies, youth people, counselors, or cool leaders. We are theologians called to watch our lives and doctrine closely (1 Tim 4.16) while shepherding students toward an accurate picture of Jesus to whom they are called to respond. Everything we teach must be grounded in theological truth lest we merely perpetuate some sort of Christian behavioral modification.</p>	<p><u>Personal formation.</u> It's the way we're being formed. It's the longing and intimacy we feel toward God. It involves ongoing "training" through spiritual disciplines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where am I growing right now? How much did I long after God today? What is motivating me? What disciplines are shaping me? Our response to these kinds of questions reflects our personal formation.</li> <li>Theological convictions remain cold and distant without the heart behind it. Embracing Jesus' personal convictions means pursuing Him like a little child, watching his every move, and asking him, "Why, why, why?" Jesus responds with more than "Because I'm God." Or, "Because I said so."</li> </ul> <p>If we're going to follow Jesus and not merely copy his behaviors, its appropriate to ask "What drove Jesus? What were his personal convictions?" And for that matter, "What are mine?" How do my heart and my personal convictions line up with his? What was the heart of this man who prioritized habits like solitude, serving others, prayer, fasting, and studying Scripture?</p>
<b>Missional Expressions...</b> <b>My Relationships and Actions</b>	<b>Contextual Awareness...</b> <b>My Relevant Embodiment of Christ</b>
<p><u>Missional.</u> That is, to live out our mission. Missional expressions are the visible indicators and the fruit that flows out of our theological convictions and personal formation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What behaviors in my life demonstrate a sound theology that lives in a heart being formed into Christlikeness? How am I calling others to follow Jesus? How will our ministry programming reflect our theological and personal convictions? How can we best express our values in how we live and relate together? . Our response to these kinds of questions reflects the missional expression of our theological convictions and our personal formation.</li> <li>Jesus' mission was straightforward—to make disciples of all nations through his church. No manuals. No budgets. No committees. No forms. Just making disciples. He demonstrated his mission with his life.</li> </ul> <p>Jesus did what he told us to do...He made disciples who made disciples. Instead of measuring our ministry successes by numbers, programs, budgets, or youth facilities, what if we measured our ministry's success in making disciples?</p>	<p><u>Context.</u> It's the cultural setting where we live and minister. It includes the combination of our personal, ministry, and cultural contexts. Personal context--our upbringing, personality, and experiences. Ministry--the dynamics in the church or organization where we lead; Cultural--the cultural setting where we live and minister and the worldview embraced therein.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does it look like to paint compelling portraits of Jesus to the people in our worlds? How do we, together, best embody Jesus to people in our community? How did the First Century world in which Jesus lead influence how he lived and ministered? . Our response to these kinds of questions reflects our contextual relevance.</li> </ul> <p>We have to understand the world in which Jesus lead--- a world where Rome was in control, Herod reigned, John was beheaded, Jewish messianic movements were dreamed and schemed, and a world where Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom. There, in the dust and drama of ancient Israel, we discover the essence of what it means to embody Jesus in the contexts where we lead.</p>