

# Syllabus

## Investigating Christian Theology 2

### VA District Training Center

Lynchburg First Church of the Nazarene  
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#### **Module Vision Statement:**

Historically, theology has been known as “the Queen of the Sciences.” While calling it that today may seem overly dramatic, all pastors-in-training will agree that a basic grounding in Christian theology is essential. Everything that a pastor does—praying, counseling, preaching, leading in worship—can and in one sense must be understood theologically. Whether acknowledged or not, theological implications assert themselves throughout the entire pastoral task, from first to last, top to bottom, front to back, side to side. It is too much to claim that theology is “the only game in town,” so far as the pastor is concerned, yet no other game makes any sense without theological awareness.

Even a seemingly nontheological task like conducting a church board meeting may be the occasion for theological reflection. For example, current approaches to God as triune suggest that the Trinity is itself the model for perfect human community, being more than one that yet always functions, acts, and believes as one. Applied to the church board situation, this may mean that the pastor does not dominate the meeting, but shares collegially with all present, working with them toward consensus or even unanimity.

It has been said that practical theology is the “crown jewel” of all theological study. These two modules are not strictly speaking courses in practical theology, and yet the practical dimension of theology must always be kept in view. Noted Nazarene theologian J. Kenneth Grider liked to talk about theology wearing overalls, and this homespun example is exactly correct. Albert Outler has well defined John Wesley’s theology as an example of a “folk theology” at its best. Regarding Wesley’s theology as a whole, “practical divinity” is the operative watchword.

### ***Overall Hopes for These Two Modules***

To survey the grand heritage and great tradition of orthodox Christian theology. Our survey will touch on biblical foundations, selected historical developments, and some contemporary problems and restatements.

The tone of these two modules is intentionally irenic (leading to consensus and peace) rather than polemic (tending to seek conflict and emphasizing disagreement with other Christian traditions). To use a cliché, this means that we are more interested in building bridges than walls. Doctrines such as the triunity of God, Jesus Christ as fully divine and fully human, the reality of sin, and Jesus Christ as God’s anointed Redeemer are universally accepted across the Christian spectrum.

Having said that, Wesleyan distinctives such as prevenient grace and entire sanctification will be stressed where appropriate.

To understand something of how theologians work and what theologians do, which also means to appreciate the craft of theological thinking. We do this remembering that the local pastor is also a theologian. We desire to appreciate theology as both an intellectual and a practical discipline.

It is important to see linkages between Christian theology and both ethics and worship.

At times we may engage in some theological analysis of culture.

Overall, the goal of a deeper knowing of the triune God must motivate our every impulse. Recall that Søren Kierkegaard said, “Only that which edifies is true for me.” This is our goal: edifying truth.

### ***A Few Governing Assumptions as We Begin***

Virtually all systematic theologies have two or three central emphases that serve to govern and guide everything said, claimed, and articulated by that particular theology. Wesleyan or Nazarene theology has often been guided by:

- a) the grace of God, especially the Wesleyan view of prevenient grace
- b) the hope that Christian theology may be seen as an integrated whole. The *ordo salutis* (Latin, meaning “the order of salvation”) is for Nazarene theology the organizing principle of the whole. In “The Scripture Way of Salvation” John Wesley expressed the order of salvation in fluid and dynamic terms: “So that the salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory.” Nazarenes have often stressed the two moments of justification (initial

sanctification) and entire sanctification (Christian perfection). Wesley's quote means that both of these two "moments" need to be taken in the broader context of the entire drama of salvation.

- c) the classic meaning of theology is that it is simply the study of God. To intend to study God may of course mean very many things, but it cannot mean only an intellectualistic and rationalistic approach to God. Experiential knowing of God has always been important for Nazarene people. Studying God must always lead to praising Him. Orthodoxy (right or correct doctrine) cannot finally be separated from Doxology, the true worship of God. These must be wedded to correct conduct or action, which is Orthopraxis. These three realities—Doxology, Orthodoxy, Orthopraxis—in some ways function as a "holy trinity" of theological method and formulation. They can be conceptualized separately, but each needs the other two to be completed.
- d) Phineas F. Bresee believed that Nazarene theology ought to be characterized by this dictum, which was not original with him, and yet reflected his way of theologizing and Christian ministry: in essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things love.

### **Educational Assumptions**

The work of the Holy Spirit is essential to any process of Christian education at any level. We will consistently request and expect the Spirit's presence within and among us.

Christian teaching and learning is best done in the context of community (people being and working together). Community is the gift of the Spirit but may be enhanced or hindered by human effort. Communities have common values, stories, practices, and goals. Explicit effort will be invested to enhance community within the class. Group work will take place in every lesson.

Every adult student has knowledge and experiences to contribute to the class. We learn not only from the learning leader and the reading assignments, but also from each other. Each student is valued not only as a learner but also as a teacher. That is one reason that so many exercises in this course are cooperative and collaborative in nature.

Journaling is an ideal way to bring theory and practice together as students synthesize the principles and content of the lessons with their own experiences, preferences, and ideas.

### **Outcome Statements**

This module contributes to the development of the following abilities as defined in the U.S. Sourcebook for Ministerial Development.

### ***PROGRAM OUTCOMES***

CN 18 Ability to list and explain the Nazarene Articles of Faith

CN 19 Ability to identify and explain the main characteristics of the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Human Person, Sin, Salvation, the Christian Life, the Church and Sacraments, and Eschatology

CN 20 Ability to reflect theologically on life and ministry

CN 21 Ability to demonstrate understanding of the sources of theological reflection, its historical development, and its contemporary expressions

CN 22 Ability to articulate the distinctive characteristics of Wesleyan theology

CN 23 Ability to identify and explain the doctrine of Holiness from a Wesleyan perspective

CP 10 Ability to synthesize, analyze, reason logically for discernment, assessment, and problem solving, and live with ambiguity

CP 11 Ability to analyze the validity of arguments and to identify their presuppositions and consequences

CP21 Ability to envision, order and participate in contextualized theologically grounded worship and to develop and lead appropriate services for special occasions (i.e. wedding, funeral, baptism, and Lord's Supper)

### **OUTCOME STATEMENTS**

Ability to integrate Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience for theological reflection

Ability to describe the role of systematic (or Christian) theology in the life of the church

Ability to systematically reflect on the Christian faith

Ability to reflect theologically on specific activities in parish ministry and discover adequate foundations for appropriate actions

Ability to give a theological rationale for leading a church-in-mission (i.e., a missional church)

Ability to integrate Wesleyan disciplines into spiritual practices that are becoming significant enrichments to one's personal journey

Ability to reflect systematically and comprehensively about the nature and content of the Christian faith, and to do so for the sake of Christ's church and His world

Ability to discern theological trends in the wider culture, especially as these trends impact the progress of Christian ministry

Ability to defend the historic Christian faith. Christian Theology 1 is not primarily an apologetic venture, yet everyone who takes this class must emerge with a defined sense of the integrity of the Christian faith, which would necessarily translate into the ability to be a defender of the faith to one degree or another.

### **Required Reading**

Hovey, Craig. "To Share in the Body: A Theology of Martyrdom for Today's Church." Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. 2008.

## **Course Requirements**

Class attendance, attention, and participation are especially important. Students are responsible for all assignments and in-class work. Much of the work in this course is small-group work. Cooperative, small-group work cannot be made up. That makes attendance imperative. Even if one does extra reading or writing, the values of discussion, dialogue, and learning from each other are thwarted. If one or two lessons are missed, the learning leader will require extra work before completion can be acknowledged. If three or more classes are missed, the student will be required to repeat the whole module.

Small-Group Work. Nothing is more important in this course than small-group work. The class members will be assigned to groups of two to four students each. The group members will serve as study partners for explorations and discussion.

## **Assignments**

***Journaling:*** The only “term assignment” is your journal. It is to be used regularly, if not daily. On at least one occasion during the term, the instructor will check the journals. In each lesson a journal assignment is included.

***Daily Work:*** This module has regular homework assignments. It is called daily work because even though the class may only meet once a week, the student should be working on the module on a “daily” basis. Sometimes the homework assignments are quite heavy. The assignments are important. Even if homework is not discussed in class every session, the work is to be handed in. This gives the instructor regular information about the student’s progress in the course. The normal time for homework to be handed in is at the beginning of each class session. All assignments are to be completed.

## **Course Outline and Schedule**

The class will meet for 26 hours according to the following schedule:

Session Date	Session Time	Session Topic
1/15/2018	1:00 - 4:00 pm	The Person of Jesus Christ Part 1
		The Person of Jesus Christ Part 2
1/22/2018	1:00 - 4:00 pm	The Person of Jesus Christ Part 3
		The Meaning of Atonement
1/29/2018	1:00 - 4:00 pm	Atonement of Grace
		The Way of Life
2/5/2018	- <b>1:00 - 3:00 pm</b> -	Justification, Adoption, And Resurrection
2/12/2018	1:00 - 4:00 pm	Thinking Theologically about Christian Perfection
		Nazarene Theologians on Entire Sanctification
2/19/2018	1:00 - 4:00 pm	Theology of the Holy Spirit Part 1
		Theology of the Holy Spirit Part 2
2/26/2018	1:00 - 4:00 pm	The Doctrine of the Church Part 1
		The Doctrine of the Church Part 2
3/5/2018	1:00 - 4:00 pm	The Theology of the Sacraments Part 1
		The Theology of the Sacraments Part 2
3/12/2018	1:00 - 4:00 pm	Eschatology
		Now and the Future Shapes of Nazarene Theology

The instructor, the course itself, and the student's progress will be evaluated. These evaluations will be made in several ways.

The progress of students will be evaluated with an eye for enhancing the learning experience by:

Carefully observing the small-group work, noting the competence of reports, the balance of discussion, the quality of the relationships, the cooperation level, and the achievement of assigned tasks

Noting in-class assignments

Careful reading of homework assignments

Journal checks

The evaluation of the course materials and the teacher will be evaluated by frequently asking and discussing the effectiveness and relevance of a certain method, experience, story, lecture, or other activity.

Some evaluation cannot be made during the class itself. Some objectives will not be measurable for years to come. If students encounter the transforming power of God at deeper levels than ever before, learn devotional skills and practice them with discipline, and incorporate the best of this course into their own ministries, the fruit of this educational endeavor could go on for a long time. In truth, that is what we expect.

### **Additional Information**

A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

### **Instructor's Availability**

Good faith efforts to serve the students both in and beyond the classroom will be made.

### **Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration**

Participating in the course of study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each course you will be required to listen to lectures, read several books, participate in discussions, write papers, and take exams. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The course work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritually formative work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head to your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work to faithfully spend time daily in your journal. Many people confess that this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling as time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, an ah-ha that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet, family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with course material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems that we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between



hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your course work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration, weaving together faith development with learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

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His two best-known books may be *A Black Theology of Liberation* and *Black Theology and Black Power*. Along with Gayraud S. Wilmore, Cone edited a helpful collection called *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*.

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