

Carey Theological College
Doctor of Ministry Program
Real World Theology

Instructor, Bob Ekblad, ThD
January 9-13, 2006
8:30AM-5:00PM
Carey Theological College

Course Description

Everyone who reads Scripture approaches it with a theology that influences their interpretation. People whose lives are marked by suffering, poverty and social exclusion often perceive that they are rejected by God. When they read the Bible they often expect to hear bad news. Many have given up on the possibility that God is 100% for them. Their assumptions are based on a complex web of life experiences including poverty, misfortune, neglect or abuse from parents and/or exclusion from the dominant culture and from the church because of race, social class or anti-social behaviour. The instructor's primary experience comes out of over twenty years of reading the Bible with people who often consider themselves "damned" – Central American peasants, Mexican migrant farm workers, inmates in Washington State jails and immigration prisons, drug dealers, gang members. Popular, street-level images of God and life will first be explored through presentations and required reading. How do many inmates, immigrants, gang members, drug addicts and other contemporary exiles view God? What are the barriers that keep today's most obvious "sinners" from believing the gospel?

"Trained" or professional readers of Scripture also read with their own baggage. While some readers may be able to quickly articulate the presuppositions that inform the way they interpret the Bible, others cannot. Views concerning God, human nature, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, salvation, the church and ethics are often hidden and remain unexamined. This seminar invites participants to become highly conscious of their theology and to deliberately examine and evaluate their assumptions in dialogue with others. Questions dealt with in this seminar include: "What theological assumptions inform your reading of the Bible and ministry?" "How has your physical location, ministry challenges, social class, nationality, ethnicity, education, gender, and other factors influence interpretation of the Bible?" "How can we develop a theology that is optimal for our unique ministry context?"

Course Objectives

By participating in this class, you should expect to become more conscious and self-reflective regarding the theological presuppositions that underlie your reading of Scripture and ministry. Specifically, participants should:

1. Develop a clearer understanding and articulation of how their theological assumptions affect their approach to the Bible and ministry
2. Deepen their theology and understanding of how ministry context challenges and matures theological assumptions.

3. Strengthen their self-awareness of hidden presuppositions so as to reflect more consciously and deliberately on Scripture and life.
4. Gain and broader perspective on how the Bible can be read for life, healing, liberation and transformation.

Course Outline (to be passed out on the first day of class)

- January 9 What and why do you believe? Unearthing one's theological assumptions and working hermeneutic as its relationship to one's particular life story, experience of God, immediate life and ministry context and church tradition.
- January 10 Reading the Bible with the Damned: reading for Good News with people submerged in bad news. How does pastoral ministry context affect interpretation of the Bible.
- January 11 Why did Jesus have to die? Understanding the Atonement and the dynamics of Salvation and their implications for life and ministry.
- January 12 Spiritual Discernment and theological reflection. On this day we will look at hearing the voice of God/ be led by the Spirit as we seek to determine the particular Word or action and theology that brings transformation to particular individuals and communities.
- January 13 Towards an evolving transformational Biblical theology

Course Requirements in preparation for the start of class

1. Students are expected to present a summary of their theological assumptions before the class, and to respond to questions and comments from other participants. This two-page paper should enumerate one's theological assumptions regarding theology, human nature, the work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, ecclesiology and ethics.
2. Students will also be required to read other students papers and write a one-page response in preparation for class.
3. Students are required to turn in five two-page book reviews on books of their choice from the required reading list.

Date due: January
25% of course grade

4. Term Paper

Students are required to write a 20-25 page (3000 words) paper presenting the theological assumptions that underlie their reading of Scripture and the implications of their theology for the life and pastoral ministry. The purpose of this paper is to challenge students to reflect on the pastoral implications of their theology in such a way that they would reason backwards from life and ministry to their theological presuppositions. This paper should include a reasoned

presentation of the students theology, including categories such as their view of God (theology), human nature and sin (anthropology), how God's presence and revelation is mediated (Christology and pneumatology), how salvation is accomplished (soteriology), incarnated in community (ecclesiology) and through action (ethics). Finally, this paper should include a statement on the student's hermeneutic regarding the interpretation of Scripture. Students should interact with the required reading and class lectures as needed.

Date due: January 27
35% of course grade

Evaluation

By letter grade, on the basis of weekly class preparation, participation, presentations and final paper.

Reading and annotated bibliography

James Alison, *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination*, Crossroad: New York, 2000. (197 pp).

William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ*, Challenges in Contemporary theology, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, (281 pages)

Guy Chevreux, *Turnings: The Kingdom of God and the Western World*, Sovereign Word, 2005 (224 pp).

Bob Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.(196pp)

Joel B. Green & Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts*, Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2000. (221 pp)

Jacques Ellul, *What I Believe*, Trans Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Bill Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind: Access to a Life of Miracles*, Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2005. (167 pp).

William Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land*,

Time Investment

Class participation	30 hrs.
Reading (1250 pp.)	50 hrs.
5 2-page book reviews	20 hrs.
Long Paper (3000 words)	50 hrs.
TOTAL	150 hrs.

Select Bibliography Recommended for this Course

Justo Gonzales, *Manana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1990.

Raymund Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation: Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Redemption*, Herder & Herder: New York, 1999. (229 pp)

Voice from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991).

Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes, Abingdon

Stony the Road we Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

Gerald O. West, *A Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996.

Stanley P. Saunders and Charles L. Campbell, *The Word on the Streets: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

John Douglas Hall, *Why Christian? For Those on the Edge of Faith*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003