

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary



ANSWERING

THE CALL

EXAMINING GOD'S CALL TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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Examining God's Call
to Christian Service

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*Dedicated to Midwestern Seminary
graduates and missionaries
Martha Myers and
William Koehn who
answered the call of Jesus Christ
and laid down their lives
in His service on
Dec. 30, 2002, in Yemen.*

Answering the Call



INTRODUCTION

By R. Philip Roberts

PRESIDENT

MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

This wonderfully helpful piece on the call to the ministry will serve as a useful guide for anyone contemplating God's call on their life. Certainly there is no grander vocations than to be a "full-time, vocational" servant of the Lord. That's why such a call needs to be taken seriously and prayerfully.

This guide will help you in considering the will of the Lord on your life. For me it was clear that the Lord God Himself purposed in His plan for Phil Roberts that he serve the Lord Jesus and His Church as a preacher of His Gospel. I knew as well that the most vital opportunity and experience for anyone was to give their heart and life to Jesus. Soul-winning became a top priority and passion.

Along with the call to the ministry is the decision about education and equipment for service. An important maxim to consider as one contemplates the next step in following the will of God is the truth that “God does not call the prepared, but He prepares the called.” It is at this juncture that a Bible-based college and seminary education come into play.

The Bible tells us that it is through this avenue of preparation and study that a workman in the Lord’s service becomes acceptable and prepared for service (2 Timothy 2:15). Although there are many good reasons that one would seek advanced education for service – including higher salaries, greater church attendance and larger budgets, which statistics show grace more the better-educated ministers of the Word – they all fade in importance when compared to this one: being a well-grounded preacher and interpreter of God’s Bible. Midwestern Baptist Seminary stands ready to assist you in following God’s mandate for study and preparation.

If the Lord has called you, and you might very well be reading this pamphlet because He has, you are blessed indeed! The Bible tells us that he who seeks the office of “overseer,” (NASB) – pastor, steward and preacher of the Word – he seeks a “good” (KJV) and a “fine” (NASB) work. Amen! May the Lord Himself bless and direct your every footstep in the following of His will for your life! ■



HOW CAN I KNOW IF I'M CALLED TO MINISTRY?

By David M. McAlpin

VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT
MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

I am a child of American suburbia. First Decatur, then Stone Mountain, Ga., – both bustling suburbs of Atlanta – were the places I called home as a boy. So when I announced that agriculture would be my college major, my parents and sisters were quite taken by surprise. I had decided that I wanted to be a cattle rancher despite the fact that I had never spent more than 10 consecutive minutes with a cow in all my life. Predictably, a few animal husbandry courses later, I came to the conclusion that cows and I didn't get along all that famously. "Maybe I'll be a veterinarian instead," I mused, and thus declared myself a biology major. But then I nearly fainted while viewing a routine horse surgery. My professor's observation that unconscious veterinarians were not in high demand

confirmed my suspicions that God had something else in store for my future. So finally I decided that when asked, “So what’s your major?” I would respond honestly and say, “Undecided.”

Undecided. The word summed up my state of mind in those days regarding what my life’s profession should be.

I’d become a believer in Christ as a high school senior. My conversion, though itself not emotional or dramatic, had resulted in some very noticeable changes in my life. My attitudes toward authority – church, government, parents and God Himself – had changed dramatically. I developed an insatiable hunger for the study of Scripture. I loved telling others about Christ, how He had changed my life and could change theirs. It seemed God was blessing my efforts. Some with whom I spoke became believers. I began teaching a Bible study on my college campus and quickly discovered I relished preparing and then presenting what I’d learned. When my friend Scott and I were approached by some fellow students about starting and leading a new campus ministry, we said yes. Again, people were saved and the number of Christians grew. I began to realize, “I really enjoy doing this. I wonder if God could be calling me into the ministry?” But I wasn’t sure. I was . . . undecided.

So I began to wrestle with the same question many Christians face: How can I know if God is calling me into ministry?

SIX INDICATORS GOD MAY BE CALLING YOU

God-called ministers become confident about their call in different ways. Not everyone has a vision

of God like Isaiah, or gets knocked off a horse like Paul. (If you've ever fallen off a horse, you probably appreciate that.) But even though the Bible doesn't contain a nice, clean checklist of experiences you're going to have if God is really calling you, there are some normative principles that, though personal applications may differ, can act as guideposts along the way. So here are six questions you'll do well to ask yourself as you process what God seems to be doing in your life.

1. Do you hunger to study and know God's Word?

Although God's call to ministry is unique for each person, this is the one component that will always be present: a fascination with biblical truth and a desire to know and communicate it no matter what the setting or context. Paul reminded Timothy that a knowledge of Scripture was essential for meeting all the challenges of ministry:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, ESV)

No matter what type of ministry in which God may call you to serve, know this: people need what the Bible offers. They need to be taught truth regarding how to have a relationship with God, how to live life well, how to keep a marriage and home together and how to raise their children. They need gentle correction when they stray from God, as well as instructions on how to recast their future so as to avoid the same mistakes. They will look to you, and appropriately so,

to tell them all these things, and you must be ready with answers. Even if you're called to a ministry other than preaching, all but the first few words of Paul's advice to Timothy still apply to you:

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Tim. 4:2, NIV)

Does a hunger to study and grasp the truths of Scripture drive your life so that you'll be able to encourage others with careful instruction?

2. Do you have a burning desire to do ministry?

Philippians 2:13 explains how God guides each Christian toward His unique will for his or her life:

It is God who is producing in you both the desire and the ability to do what pleases Him. (Phil. 2:13, ISV)

If God is calling you into the ministry, His Spirit at work within you will produce a *desire* to pursue that path, a desire that will grow over an extended period of time.

When God calls someone to a certain career, He doesn't simply bypass their will and say, "This is what I've chosen for you to do. If you don't like it, tough. Get used to it, because I'm in charge here, not you." That's not how He works. Please don't misunderstand. I believe strongly in the sovereignty of God. But to get us onto the path He's chosen for our lives, He works on us from the inside out. He wisely leads us through circumstances that introduce new possibilities to us, new

worlds we never knew existed.

A mission trip to Brazil can provide an opportunity for you to give your personal testimony and teach a Bible study to teens. Then you see several of them gloriously converted before your eyes. You feel something you've never felt before — the glory and power of being used by God to bring someone else to Christ! You find yourself thinking about it over and over, saying to yourself, *“That was incredible. I wonder what it would be like to spend my whole life doing things like that.”*

What is happening? God is awakening within you the desire to do what He has purposed you to do with your life. Even in those who resist a call to ministry, there is still the growing realization that this is what God wants. It's the only type of life work that will be really fulfilling, though other professions may still have great appeal at the moment. This isn't coercion; it's simply the way God turns our hearts and affections toward the path He has chosen for us.

3. Is there evidence of spiritual gifting in the area of your suspected call?

Look back at Philippians 2:13 again. God gives to those He calls not only the desire but also the *ability* to do ministry.

For example, if you suspect God is calling you to be a pastor, then according to 1 Timothy 3:2 you should be “able to teach.” That is, God will have given you, at conversion, the spiritual gift of teaching, plus other gifts as well. Likewise, if you feel called to be a biblical counselor, look for evidence of the gift of exhortation (encouragement) or perhaps teaching. Ask

others who'll be honest with you if they see these gifts emerging in your life.

Don't get discouraged if you don't seem to have what it takes to do ministry right away. Just having the gift of teaching doesn't make you a good Bible teacher or preacher! Your effectiveness will grow as you learn, gain experience and sharpen your skills.

4. Are you willing to subject yourself to the lifestyle of discipline required to become competent in the Scriptures?

Ministry is no place for mediocrity. To be able to interpret the Bible accurately and communicate it with power and precision, training is demanded. Hear Paul's advice to Timothy:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15, NIV)

Apart from personal character, perhaps nothing matters more in ministry than having the ability to handle the Scriptures correctly. One of the most powerful preachers mentioned in the book of Acts was Apollos. Notice how he is described:

Apollos. . . was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, . . . He powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus (Acts 18:24-28 ESV).

Eloquent, competent in the Scriptures, fervent in spirit, teaching accurately, powerfully refuting, showing by the Scriptures . . . How did Apollos become all these things? *“He had been instructed in the way of the Lord.”* He had invested a portion of his life in becoming educated in God’s Word.

Effectiveness in ministry doesn’t just happen. It’s the result of a consecrated life, and that always includes personal sacrifice and discipline. To become “competent in the Scriptures” as Apollos was, you need knowledge, so get an education. You need someone after whom to model your life, so find mentors and learn with quiet humility. If you’re not willing to do these things, you’re not ready for the ministry.

5. Is there a growing sense of competency as you take opportunities to do ministry?

If God is calling you, He’ll give you opportunities – little ones at first – to minister to others in real life settings. As you test out your gifts, (sometimes on incredibly patient and unsuspecting congregations) you should find yourself saying, *“I think I could be good at this.”*

At the first church I pastored, an elderly lady would say the same thing to me every Sunday as she left. Intending, I suppose, to encourage me, she would always remark, *“You’ll make a fine preacher someday.”* I assume she thought – with embarrassing accuracy, I might add – that though I was a miserably wretched specimen of preacher-boy at the moment, she could observe I was making progress and saw at least a glimmer of hope that a sovereign God could salvage some-

thing from the homiletical trainwreck she witnessed on a weekly basis. When I read 1 Timothy 4:15, I realized that her comments were actually (in an odd sort of way) a confirmation of God's call upon my life:

Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. (1 Tim. 4:15 ESV)

If God is indeed calling you, then you as well as others will see improvement in your skills and effectiveness. They will "see your progress."

6. Do other Christians, especially those in your home church, agree that God is calling you?

Not only will you want to do ministry, but others in the Christian community will sense and see that calling, and they will confirm your fitness for ministry. In Acts 16 we find this description of young Timothy:

He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. (Acts 16:2, ESV)

If Paul took the time to hear what those in Timothy's home church thought of him before adding him to the missionary team, it must have been important. Even so today, those in your current church who've seen you grow in the Lord should be willing to affirm that God has indeed called you, and that your character is in line with those traits laid out in the third chapter of 1 Timothy. Dr. Terry Wilder discusses these in the following chapter of this booklet.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

No two experiences are the same in the sense of how a person feels or senses God's call. For some this is a dramatic, emotional experience – a moment in time when God seems to break through and unmistakably impress upon them that He has called them. That was my experience. But it seems that for most, this inner call consists of a gradually growing awareness that this is the direction God wants their lives to take.

We've looked at the issue of God's call from two perspectives. First, do you personally sense God's call upon your life? Second, and just as important, do others also see the evidences of that call in your life? If the answer is yes to both questions, then I think it's appropriate for us to accept as a "working hypothesis" (a term coined by Mark DeVine, former Midwestern theology professor) that God has indeed called you. If so, future and further experience will prove that claim valid.

That future experience needs to include a college and seminary education. Because Midwestern Seminary serves the local church by biblically educating God-called men and women to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ, it may very well be that this is the place God wants you to train. As you pray, ask God to lead you to the setting where He can mold you into a man or woman of God who will impact this world to the glory and honor of Christ. ■

Chapter Two



WHAT A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL MUST BE

- I TIMOTHY 3

By *Terry Wilder*

FORMER ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT AND GREEK
MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Most of us have applied for a job. Without a doubt, all of us have. You know the process. You hear that a company or firm is hiring, and so you go to fill out the application, listing your credentials, experiences and the like. If you are fortunate, you then proceed to the next step and get an interview with the employer. The employer knows *exactly what he requires for an employee*. He knows precisely the qualifications that anyone hoping to fill the available post must have.

In a similar manner, God Almighty knows exactly what is required of those hoping to be leaders in His churches. He knows precisely the qualifications that need to be met by those who are entrusted with the Gospel and by those who aspire to exercise spiritual

oversight with people in the churches. The pulpits and churches across our land and our world are not open to any old “Tom, Dick or Harry,” or even a “Sue, Jane or Mary.” The requirements laid down in Scripture have to be met by one who aspires to be a church leader. If God has called you to be pastor, or for that matter, to any place of Christian service, your call to the ministry cannot be considered separately from what God has revealed in His Word. The two go together. The qualifications in I Timothy 3:1-7 are especially required of pastors, but we should never think that these traits are limited strictly to them. On the contrary, anyone called to a ministry of the Gospel must exhibit these godly characteristics in their lives.

Paul wrote I Timothy as he traveled to Macedonia around 63-65 A.D. He sent the letter to his young associate, Timothy, whom he viewed as a steward entrusted with the Gospel. He instructed Timothy to stay in Ephesus so that he might command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer (1:3). Paul hoped to make a future visit to Timothy in Ephesus, but in the event that he was delayed, he wrote so that one might know how to conduct himself in God’s household, the church (3:14-15). First Timothy is a letter that contains many instructions given to Timothy “the steward” so that he might correct or manage God’s household. Some of these directives were concerned specifically with leadership in the church.

First Timothy 3:1-7 contains four general statements that summarize the qualifications for stewards that God, through Paul, has laid down in His Holy Word. What are the qualities that should characterize those entrusted with the Gospel ministry? What are

the characteristics required of a man who, out of love and commitment to Christ, has set his heart on doing such a fine, noble work (3:1)?

First, a minister of the Gospel must be a man of impeccable moral character (3:2-3). In other words he must be obedient in observable behavior. He absolutely must be so. The word “must be” is a string word in the original language. The man who aspires to be a church leader has one shot at integrity, and if he blows it, then that’s it as far as church leadership is concerned. He must be “above re-

proach.” In other words, he must be someone of blameless character. No one can properly bring a charge of un-

fitness against him and make it stick. This requirement does not mean that a steward is not a sinner or has to be perfect, but it does mean that his Christian life in general cannot be criticized. The shortcomings in his life would not make headline news. The phrase “above reproach” acts as an umbrella term that governs all of the following virtues which should describe and distinguish a minister of the Gospel.

A Gospel minister must be the “husband of one wife,” *literally a one-woman type of man.* If married, the steward is required to have an exemplary married life; he is to be blameless and above reproach in his relationships with the opposite sex and faithful to his wife. An unmarried man, if called to serve, is not excluded from being above reproach in his relationships with the opposite sex. He must be morally pure and

*He must be above reproach...
he must be someone of
blameless character*

celibate.

Several other qualifications follow. The minister must be “temperate;” he must possess a mental self-control that rules out all forms of excess or rash actions. He must be “prudent,” a sensible person who is trustworthy and balanced in his judgment. He must be “respectable;” his outward life must reflect an inner stability. He must be “hospitable” (literally a “lover of strangers”) and exercise care toward others. This latter trait was highly regarded and especially important in Paul’s day when traveling Christian teachers and preachers were quite common and dependent upon care and support of fellow believers. The minister must be “able to teach;” competent and skillful in communicating Christian truth. *And we should note that one who is able to teach should also be teachable.*

The overseer must also “not be addicted to wine.” In other words, a minister of the Gospel must not be a drunk. Drunkenness was a vice frowned upon in antiquity, and in our day drinking alcohol wrecks lives. Abstinence is the best policy so as not to hinder one’s testimony or to become a stumbling block to others. The steward of the Gospel must not be “pugnacious,” i.e. he must not be a fighter and browbeat people with threats of violence. He must not be a quick-tempered person who would rather use his fists than his reason. Rather, he is to be “gentle,” i.e. kind, forbearing, considerate and “peaceable.” He rejects and refrains from all forms of fighting and threatening. The steward must also be “free from the love of money.” In other words, he must not be a greedy person, using his position of leadership for financial or material gain. He must have his mind set on the souls of people rather

than on get-rich-quick schemes.

Second, a minister of the Gospel must be someone who leads his own family well (3:4-5). Paul instructed that a church leader must be an example in leading and managing his own family. He is expected to raise children who will be obedient and known for their generally good behavior. The minister's family is not perfect by any means, but it should be as free of problems as possible. The reason behind this qualification is set forth in verse 5: *If a man cannot manage things in the home, then he cannot lead in the church.* He has no business doing so. Paul viewed leadership in the family household as a proving ground for leadership in God's household, the church.

Third, a minister of the Gospel must be experienced in the Christian life (3:6). He must not be a "neophyte," i.e. he must not have been recently converted to the Christian faith. The danger in placing a recent convert in a place of Christian leadership is that he may fall victim to conceit as a result of his important position, which in turn causes him to lose perspective and fall. He becomes prideful and falls into the condemnation or the spiritual traps that Satan causes. Sometimes when new converts become Christian leaders, it becomes evident that rather than being called of God to their post, they have instead a tremendous thirst for attention or ego.

Fourth, a minister of the Gospel must have a good witness amongst unbelievers (3:7). The church leader must have a credible witness among the lost, i.e. among those outside the church who do not know Jesus Christ. He must have a good name and a good standing in the community that goes beyond the church.

He should provide to those who have not believed an example of integrity and commitment to the gospel that he professes. The minister's observable behavior must be a testimony to others. The reason this kind of witness is necessary is because a bad reputation would cause a minister and his church to fall into disgrace or be slandered. Such reproach and disgrace is a snare or a trap of the devil.

Perhaps we can better understand the latter point with the following illustration. Let's say that I frequented a tavern in my town, and some people in my community saw me intoxicated. Once news of that sin circulated publicly – *and it would* – that sin would cause me to fall into disgrace. Everything that I had stood for as a minister of the Gospel would now be considered suspect. No one would believe that anything I had to say about Jesus was credible. Further, my actions would have caused me not only to bring reproach on myself but also on the name of Christ and the church's ministry. From that point on, whenever I or the church tried to share the Gospel with anybody, we would not get very far because I had fallen into reproach, a snare of the devil.

God is serious about His Word, and He has put forth requirements in it which must be met by those who would be stewards of the Gospel. If we do not meet these qualifications, it does not mean that God cannot or will not use us in ministry; we just cannot be leaders in His church. May God protect us from the evil one and empower us as we guard our hearts and testimonies for the cause of Christ! ■

Chapter Three



WHY YOU SHOULD GO TO SEMINARY

By J. Alan Branch

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS
MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Baptists believe that doctrinal integrity, moral purity and spiritual and personal maturity are the basic prerequisites to ministry. A person who excels in these areas can be used by God in mighty ways. Why, then, should someone invest several years of their life in seminary training? Every person called to ministry should remember the wisdom of Proverbs 19:2, which says, “*It is not good to have zeal without knowledge or be hasty and miss the way.*” With that in mind, here are the unofficial “top ten” objections to seminary and a brief response:

OBJECTION ONE: “*I believe the Bible alone is sufficient for everything I need to know. Why should I go to seminary?*” MBTS affirms the sufficiency of Scripture. In fact, we

believe the Bible when it says, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). In a day when world religions are growing rapidly in our country, it is more imperative than ever for ministers to understand the core truths of the Christian faith so that we can proclaim Christ crucified, buried and resurrected with clarity.

OBJECTION TWO: *“I’ve heard that seminary will destroy your passion for serving God.”*

The heartbeat of our seminary is the Great Commission. Our desire is to instill passion, not diminish it. Our students are involved in personal evangelism, accountability groups, praise and worship opportunities and dynamic chapel services. Take a long look at some of the most dynamic churches, and you will discover most of the pastors attended seminary!

OBJECTION THREE: *“I’m already involved in a fruitful ministry and don’t have time for seminary.”*

We rejoice when any ministry is characterized by growth and the conversion of the lost to Jesus Christ. Midwestern Seminary offers classes in a variety of delivery methods to encourage people already serving a church to participate in theological education. Furthermore, a healthy question to ask is this: “What legacy do I want left behind me?” Jesus said, “I chose you and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain” (John 15:16). Theological education is one step toward a ministry that not only sees growth but “fruit that remains.”

OBJECTION FOUR: *“My pastor said that he can train and equip me in our church. Plus, I know great preachers who never had any formal training.”*

We celebrate and affirm the primacy of the local church. In fact, MBTS is in covenant relationships with the thousands of local churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. We expect each student to be active in a local church while attending seminary. Indeed it is true that many great preachers have never attended seminary. Yet, some of those same preachers started or supported schools for ministerial training! A seminary can also help preachers in ways that a local church cannot. Specifically, the resource of a world-class faculty with minds on fire for Jesus Christ can help students understand objections to the Gospel and how to respond to those objections so that more people can come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

OBJECTION FIVE: *“I have already earned an undergraduate degree in religion or the Bible.”*

Proverbs 4:7 says, “Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding.” Also, some of your religion undergraduate classes may qualify you for advanced standing. It is possible for students to shorten the Masters of Divinity program by up to 14 hours. Advanced standing exams are offered the first two weeks of August each year. Please contact the Academic Dean’s Office for more information.

OBJECTION SIX: *“Most of the required classes have little to do with practical ministry.”*

Good methodology and pastoral practice flows from good theology. Furthermore, classes like Church

History or New Testament Introduction help students discover the generations of faithful believers who have gone before them and have struggled with the same challenges we face today.

OBJECTION SEVEN: *“The degree is too long and the academic requirements are too demanding.”*

Jesus Christ began his ministry at age 30. Paul spent time preparing for the ministry after his conversion. If these examples are informative, then we should consider the wisdom of solid preparation for ministry. The goal of our school is to educate God-called men and women to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Our professors are rigorous but fair. Others have survived and so will you!

OBJECTION EIGHT: *“I cannot afford to go to seminary.”*

The Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention provides financial support for each student who attends MBTS. Because of the generous gifts from our churches, MBTS is able to maintain an affordable tuition and rent. Furthermore, when God calls someone to a seminary, He also provides the means needed for them to attend. We walk by faith!

OBJECTION NINE: *“Online degrees are much more flexible and will not require that I relocate.”*

It is true that a plethora of distance learning and online degrees are available. It is also true that the vast majority of them are not accredited. Any student who seeks an education should ask this question: “Am I earning a degree of significance and value?” Furthermore, seminary is more than just learning the facts. It

contributes to shaping one's character. Shaping of character is best accomplished in groups.

OBJECTION TEN: *“The demands of seminary will cause me to neglect my family.”*

The MBTS campus is a wonderful place for families. Many of our graduates look back on their years at our campus as some of the best in their marriage.

The moral and spiritual challenges facing us today require that we give our very best for Christ. A call to preach is a call to prepare. Millions and millions of lost people need to hear the Gospel. The goal of our seminary is to train Christians so that we can get the Gospel to one more lost person. I pray God leads you to join us! ■

Chapter Four



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN AT SEMINARY

By Thorvald B. Madsen

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT, ETHICS
AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
DEAN OF MIDWESTERN BAPTIST COLLEGE, SBC

All of us have heard stories about Christians who have done great things for God without a day's worth of advanced education. They have not been to seminary. In fact, they might never have gone to college or even finished high school. They just had basic literacy, common sense and a strong desire to serve the Lord. And God, for His part, was pleased to use these people to advance His kingdom. Likewise, we might have heard a few more stories in our day that show how dangerous seminaries can be. Someone detected a call in his life to serve the Lord, and he rushed off to get himself a seminary education. But then his professors purged all the zeal and godliness from his life with leftist criticisms of the Bible.

These anecdotes do not help a person see the value of getting a seminary education. In fact, they actually discourage it. But this conclusion only follows if one goes to the *wrong seminary*. At their best, seminaries can, with God's help, turn ordinary disciple-makers into extraordinary ones. Seminary training can impart fields of knowledge and ability that would take years of trial and error to acquire if one followed through to get them. And let's face it, for every "natural" that we've met in our lives – for every person who got by with next-to-nothing – each of us has probably met 10 who could have used lots of help and never got it. Their lives illustrate the value of formal education in a negative way.

So what indispensable lessons would a seminary education provide? We can answer our question best by imagining a journey that begins with the Bible and ends with its practical application to daily life. Evangelical Christians believe that our ideas about theology and ministry must rest upon the Old and New Testaments. Consequently, students at seminaries like Midwestern are typically required to develop a working knowledge of biblical Greek and Hebrew, along with an understanding of the life and culture of the ancient world. In this way, they are equipped to place the Scriptures in historical context, knowing that these texts – like all others – mean (to us) what they meant (to their original audiences). There is so much living color in the Bible that its readers will not see if they do not read it in Greek or Hebrew with Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultural literacy. Seminary courses in languages, hermeneutics and biblical backgrounds provide this kind of training.

The next step is to pull together our conclusions regarding the individual texts of Scripture so that we develop a systematic theology. We learn to extract what the Bible says about the big questions of doctrine. What is God like? What's wrong with the world? How do we get saved? What happens when we die? We also need to know what conclusions others have come to regarding these questions, looking both to our own times and to church history. Great preachers and students of the Bible will have well-developed "Christian memories." Thus a seminary education includes training in systematic theology, historical theology and church history.

Eventually, the prospective disciple-maker will have to tell others what the Bible says about right and wrong. He'll also find occasions to defend its claims

when the lost and the saved are struggling to believe. Consequently, seminary students receive training in Christian ethics and apologetics. They also spend a significant amount of time sharpening their skills in evangelism, education and expository preaching. After all, if the disciple-maker cannot show other people what the Scriptures mean and how they apply to daily life, he cannot do his job at all. This step from learning to teaching is central to the seminary curriculum, and seminary students must take it through hands-on experience.

*Great preachers
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Finally, consider the most practical aspects of discipling, the end of the journey that began with biblical exegesis. In order to advance the Kingdom through his own ministry, the Christian leader will have to get organized. He'll need to work with others and encourage them to do what he cannot do independently. Christians under his care will also come to him with personal problems – everything from alcoholism to the prospect of divorce. And so, with these needs in mind, a seminary education typically includes significant training in leadership and counseling. In fact, seminary students learn how to do the most common tasks of ministry, such as perform weddings and funerals

*In order to advance the Kingdom
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and read financial statements.

This outline treats the Master of Divinity curriculum as being typical of what a seminary education

provides. However, it is also possible to concentrate one's education on narrower fields of study. For example, MBTS offers degree programs such as biblical languages, archaeology, education, worship leadership, counseling and church planting, to name several examples. All of these areas of specialization are offered to Christian workers whose calling is to support pastors and missionaries by meeting needs of scholarship and practice that later cannot be fully addressed.

Perhaps someone will now say, "Why can't I stay home and teach myself these subjects? Wouldn't that be just as good?" In response, two facts ought to

be kept in mind. First, very few of us can gain all of this knowledge apart from a structured learning environment, a setting which includes assignments and examinations. In most cases, we won't do this on our own.

Secondly, half of a seminary education comes from personal interactions with other students and professors. One learns just from informal contacts in a hallway or bookstore. Seminary is the place where prospective Christian workers can build lifelong friendships. In this sense, there is far more to a seminary education than meets the eye. Come and visit us sometime. We'll show you what we mean. ■

Chapter Five



HOW WILL I EVER PAY FOR MY SEMINARY EDUCATION?

By Gerald Beechum

FINANCIAL AID COORDINATOR

MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

and Anthony Allen

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Responding to the call of God requires obedience and faith. As the writer of Hebrews explains, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). As many Christian workers respond to the call of God, the evidence of how this call will be fulfilled is often unclear. Sometimes our faith gives way and questions of doubt arise. The initial exuberance of moving to seminary, meeting new people and participating in classes can quickly subside to the anxiety of mid-term exams, papers and tests. Yet, it is in this crucible of life that God is at work to shape us and form us into the men and women He wants us to become.

Financing your seminary education is only part of the process of preparing you for a lifetime of ef-

fective service for the kingdom. Financial planning requires both the discipline of preparation and a prayerful dependence on God's provision. Perhaps one of the greatest examples is found in Proverbs 6:6-8: "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her supplies in the summer, and gathers her provision in the harvest." These principles are simple but profound. God supplies the provisions; we diligently prepare in advance.

*"I have learned both to
be full and to be hungry,
both to abound and
to suffer need."
— Phillipians 4:12*

Over the years, I have met with many individuals and couples who were considering theological education. Inevitably the question would surface, "How will I pay for my seminary education?" Fortunately, Southern Baptists

have the opportunity to get a high-quality theological education at a fraction of the cost of most other seminaries. This is due in large measure to the miracle of the Cooperative Program and the generous support Southern Baptist seminaries receive from the Southern Baptist Convention. We are indebted to Southern Baptists who sacrificially give so that men and women responding to the call of God can pursue theological education.

The old cliché that says, "Where God guides, He will provide," is certainly true. Yet, many times God works in ways we cannot even begin to imagine. Paul knew of the adequacy of God's provision in his life when he wrote, "And my God shall supply all your

needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Interestingly, this verse follows Philippians 4:12 where Paul confesses, “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Perhaps He will supply your needs through an employment opportunity, through a scholarship or even through the generous giving of other individuals who will invest in your ministry. There are also other options that include payment plans, grants and student loans. God works to provide for your training, so you can be certain that your investments in training for your calling will reap both temporal and eternal rewards.

WAYS TO FINANCE YOUR EDUCATION

Our students use a variety of methods to finance their education. The typical student will combine several of these options in paying for his or her education. As you are planning and praying about your future, we want you to be aware of the following available options:

1. Part or Full-Time Employment

With hundreds of Southern Baptist churches within an hour’s drive of the seminary, many Midwestern students serve in either full-time or part-time ministry positions. Additionally, the seminary itself employs a limited number of students for administrative, clerical, maintenance and other types of jobs on campus. Given the excellent reputation Midwestern students have with employers for being reliable, honest and drug-free, numerous part-time jobs that suit a

student's changing schedule are available in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Some of these companies even offer tuition assistance programs.

2. FACTS Payment Plan

Our monthly payment plan, operated through an organization known as FACTS, is an automatic debit plan that takes payments out of your checking or savings account. There is a one-time \$25 fee to participate, and no interest is charged.

3. Church/Denominational Support

Many churches provide scholarships to those who intend to pursue seminary or Bible college training. Also, many state conventions and local associations offer additional scholarships and grants. For applications, check with your local church, convention and association.

4. Scholarships

External Scholarships: External scholarships are those offered and funded by organizations other than Midwestern. Many of these scholarships can be found, and students are encouraged to apply for all which they may qualify. The Student Development office maintains a limited database of external scholarships that students are free to access upon request. Additionally, the MBTS website has a list of other websites that assist students in locating external scholarships. Go to www.mbts.edu, click on Admissions, then Financial Aid, then Scholarship Information.

Internal Scholarships: Midwestern students benefit each year from a variety of scholarships funded by

generous donors for the purpose of assisting students with their educational costs. Scholarships are competitive and are based on three areas: academic performance, ministry involvement and financial need. Although Midwestern seeks to assist many students with scholarships, rarely do scholarships cover all of a student's tuition costs. Students applying for internal scholarships should expect to look for other supplemental money.

5. Grants

Midwestern is the only Southern Baptist seminary that is Title IV approved to offer Federal Pell Grants. A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid. Pell Grants are awarded to undergraduate students who qualify based on need.

6. Student Loans

Midwestern is the only Southern Baptist seminary that is Title IV approved to offer Federal Direct Loans. Our participation allows students access to lower interest rates and even interest-free loans. Federal student loans are for educational purposes and must be repaid. MBTS offers access to Federal Direct Loans (both subsidized and unsubsidized), Graduate Plus Loans and Parent Plus Loans.

7. Tuition Assistance and Veterans Benefits

Midwestern cooperates with many employers who offer tuition assistance, and we also participate in the VA Education Program. If you believe that you qualify for VA benefits, you can check your eligibility at the VA's website. If you believe you qualify for employ-

er benefits, contact your company's human resources office.

Final Thoughts

There are several practical things you can do to begin the process of planning to finance your seminary education. First, visit the Financial Aid section of the MBTS website to learn about possible financial assistance and available scholarships. Go to www.mbts.edu, click on Admissions, then Financial Aid. Second, share your needs with others who may wish to support you. Oftentimes your church, association or state convention has some scholarship assistance to help you. Third, don't overlook private education scholarships that may be available to you. Search the Internet to see what may be available.

Finally, I would recommend that you visit the Midwestern campus and meet with our Financial Aid Coordinator to discover what assistance may be available. Remember that the sooner you begin the process, the more help will be available. Scholarships, loans and grants are often time-sensitive, so remember to start early.

For more information, contact the MBTS Financial Aid office at 816.414.3739 or financialaid@mbts.edu. May God bless and guide you as you trust Him and move forward! ■



THE MASTER OF DIVINITY DEGREE

The Master of Divinity degree is the basic seminary degree for college graduates. It is the appropriate first theological degree for individuals who anticipate ordination. The basic Master of Divinity degree at Midwestern Seminary requires 89 semester hours. It is designed for individuals who anticipate serving as pastors, evangelists, associate pastors, missionaries or in other ministries that emphasize expository teaching of the Word of God. In most cases, it is also the appropriate degree for students who anticipate doctoral training and a ministry of college- or seminary-level teaching.

To meet the needs of students with definite calls to specialized ministries, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary also offers six specialization tracks within the Master of Divinity. The Master of Divinity with a specialization emphasis requires 92 semester hours. Specialization emphases are offered in Christian Education, Collegiate Ministries, International Church Planting, North American Church

Planting, Urban Ministry, Worship Leadership and Youth Ministries. After meeting the regular admission requirements for the Master of Divinity degree, approval for selection to the specialization emphases is coordinated through the faculty and/or the related SBC board.

Below is the curriculum for the Master of Divinity degree:

BASIC M.Div. CURRICULUM

Course Name	Credit Hours
Foundational Core	43 hours
Old Testament Survey I & II	6 hours
New Testament Survey I & II	6 hours
Introduction to Hermeneutics	2 hours
History of Christianity I & II	6 hours
Baptist History	3 hours
Theology I & II	6 hours
Christian Ethics	3 hours
Personal Spiritual Disciplines	2 hours
Basic Evangelism	3 hours
Introduction to Pastoral Care & Counseling ..	3 hours
Theology and Philosophy of Missions	3 hours
 M.Div. Emphasis	 29 hours
Elementary Hebrew I & II	6 hours
Elementary Greek I & II	6 hours
Introduction to Apologetics	2 hours
Principles of Preaching	3 hours
Expository Preaching	3 hours
Introduction to Pastoral Leadership	2 hours
Introduction to Pastoral Ministry	2 hours
Supervised Ministry	1 hour
Fundamentals of Music for Worship Leadership OR Church Administration	2 hours
Electives	17 hours
Total	89 hours



THE BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE

The Bachelor of Arts degree in Biblical Studies provides college-level preparation for service in churches and other Christian ministries through programs of practical education, spiritual and character development and theological understandings. The degree also prepares students for graduate-level study. The 126-hour degree program is offered in two formats: Traditional or Accelerated (MACCEL).

Below is the curriculum for the Bachelor of Arts degree in Biblical Studies:

BACHELOR DEGREE CURRICULUM (TRADITIONAL)	
Course Name	Credit Hours
Biblical/Theological Studies	18 hours
Biblical Interpretation	3 hours
The Pentateuch	3 hours
The Gospels	3 hours
Christian Doctrine I & II	6 hours
Personal Evangelism & Discipleship	3 hours

General Education 52 hours

Survey of Old Testament Literature	3 hours
Survey of New Testament Literature	3 hours
Historical Geography of the Bible	3 hours
English Composition I & II	6 hours
Basic College Mathematics	3 hours
Introduction to Nutrition	3 hours
Introduction to Computers	3 hours
Basic Speech Communication	3 hours
Marriage & Family	3 hours
World Literature	3 hours
Introduction to Business & Finance	3 hours
Freshman Experience	1 hour
Christianity & the Western World	3 hours
Worldviews	3 hours
Christian Ethics	3 hours
Introduction to Philosophy	3 hours
Introduction to Music in the Church	3 hours

Biblical Studies Major 39 hours

Prophetic Literature of the OT I & II	6 hours
Wisdom & Poetic Literature of the OT	3 hours
The Acts & Pauline Epistles	3 hours
Hebrews and General Epistles	3 hours
Biblical Backgrounds	3 hours
Elementary Greek I & II OR	
Elementary Hebrew I & II	6 hours
Teaching Ministry of the Church	3 hours
Principles of Christian Teaching	3 hours
Baptist History and Practice	3 hours
Biblical Theology	3 hours
Global Missions and Evangelism	3 hours

Christian Ministry Major 39 hours

Biblical Backgrounds	3 hours
Elementary Greek I & II OR	
Elementary Hebrew I & II	6 hours
Biblical Studies Electives	6 hours
Teaching Ministry of the Church.....	3 hours
Making Disciples	3 hours

Principles of Christian Teaching.....	3 hours
Leading Church Ministries.....	3 hours
Baptist History & Practice.....	3 hours
Pastoral Care & Ministry	3 hours
Integrative Seminar	3 hours
Global Missions & Evangelism	3 hours

Electives 17 hours
Total 126 hours

BACHELOR DEGREE CURRICULUM MACCEL (ACCELERATED)

Course Name	Credit Hours
General Education	6 hours
Marriage & Family	3 hours
Worldviews	3 hours

Biblical/Theological Studies	18 hours
Biblical Interpretation	3 hours
The Pentateuch	3 hours
The Gospels	3 hours
Christian Doctrine I & II	6 hours
Personal Evangelism & Discipleship	3 hours

Biblical Studies Major	24 hours
Prophetic Literature of the OT I & II	6 hours
Wisdom & Poetic Literature of the OT	3 hours
The Acts & Pauline Letters	3 hours
Romans	3 hours
Teaching Ministry of the Church	3 hours
Leading Church Ministries	3 hours
Global Missions & Evangelism	3 hours

Electives 30 hours
Total 126 hours

*To learn more about the
 Midwestern Baptist College and Seminary degree programs
 or to talk to an academic counselor,
 call 800-944-MBTS (6287)
 or log on to our website at www.mbts.edu.*



IS GOD CALLING YOU TO MINISTRY?

*The following verses can shape your
prayers as you seek God's will:*

Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Romans 10:14 “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?”

Acts 18:24, 26 “Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures... But when Priscilla and Aquilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

II Peter 1:13a “Therefore, prepare your minds for action.”

Jude 3 “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”

Proverbs 19:2 “Also, it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, and he who hurries his footsteps errs.”

I Peter 5:7 “...Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

II Timothy 2:15 “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth.”

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