

##---: Biblical Foundations for Faith, Work, Economics, and Vocation – Year 1 (12 units)

DESCRIPTION:

The goal of the first year course is for students to gain in-depth, integrative, and useful knowledge of biblical teaching on faith-work, economics, and vocation. Work, for the purposes of this course, includes all productive human activity, not only what we do for pay. Economics has to do with money, but also with systems and structures that enable (or limit) human flourishing and the common good. Vocation is the call of God to all believers, lived through a vast range of particular vocations, not limited to church, missionary, and other paid work.

Students will develop deep knowledge of scriptural teaching on these topics by reading every biblical passage directly relevant to work, with seasoned input from the *Theology of Work Bible Commentary* as well as other commentators and writers. Additional passages on vocation and/or economics will also be read. Key passages will be examined in class through interactive conversation that invites students to grapple with the historical, theological, and practical meaning of the biblical text. Among essential themes in the course, related to the main topics, are: the story of God (creation, fall, redemption, reconciliation/consummation), incarnation, justice, Sabbath, shalom, eschatology, ecclesiology, and the sacred/secular divide.

Notable scholars (in class and online) will enrich the student experience through guest lectures and dialogue. Marketplace leaders whose work and life are shaped by Scripture will provide examples of workers embodying biblical teaching. Students will reflect critically on their own work and create biblically informed resources to serve the people they lead in their churches or through their parachurch organizations. Students will also engage personally with the content of this course as they reflect on their own work, economics, and vocation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Through participation in this course students will:

1. Develop a well-informed, thoughtful understanding of the broad scope of biblical teaching on faith, work, economics, and vocation.
2. Attain in-depth knowledge of certain key biblical passages, their historical contexts, their exegetical challenges, their theological contributions, and how they are being embodied by believers and believing communities.
3. Understand how crucial biblical themes, such as creation and incarnation, both shape and reflect our understanding of faith, work, economics, and vocation.
4. Produce resources that will help them in their church or parachurch settings to instruct others in biblical teaching on faith, work, economics, and vocation.
5. Be prepared to provide biblically-informed answers to many of the basic questions they might receive from church members about faith, work, economics, and vocation.
6. Critically examine their own work in churches and parachurch settings in light of biblical teaching on faith, work, economics, and vocation.
7. Clarify their own personal vocation and how it is embodied in their particular vocational life.

COURSE FORMAT:

This course is based upon and centered in the reading and study of Scripture, specifically, the passages that are directly relevant to faith-work, economics and vocation. The cohort gathering will be most valuable if all members have completed the required pre-readings, especially the close reading of approximately 900 biblical passages, along with relevant commentary. Course meetings will include lectures from the professor and guests, but will mainly feature interactive dialogue on the meaning of key biblical passages in their historical and theological context, with implications for contemporary ministry and practice. Large group class sessions will be augmented with small group interaction and team projects.

RELEVANCE FOR MINISTRY:

One of the most important things a church or parachurch leader can do is to help followers of Jesus understand biblical teaching on faith-work, economics, and vocation, so that they might live as disciples in the activities that fill their lives, and so that they might discover transcendent meaning in their work as they participate in God's work in the world. This course will not only prepare leaders for this crucial task, but it will also equip them to respond wisely to the growing desire among Christians to live integrated lives in which their daily work is informed and transformed by their faith.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

The Biblical Text, Commentary, and Devotion

The main reading material for this course is Scripture. The very best way for students to develop a thorough, accurate understanding of biblical teaching on faith-work, economics, and vocation is by reading widely and deeply in Scripture. Thus, students are expected to read carefully every biblical passage relevant to work as well as selected passages related to economics and vocation. Additionally, students will read the entire *Theology of Work Bible Commentary*, which offers seasoned insight on every biblical passage pertaining to work, along with connections to work in the contemporary world. This commentary addresses 859 passages of Scripture. It can be purchased in paperback. But the entire *TOW Bible Commentary* is available for free online at www.theologyofwork.org. Students can read online or download the commentary in printable PDF versions. The best way for students to work through the biblical material is: 1) read the work-oriented introduction to the biblical book in the TOW commentary; 2) using the passage divisions of the TOW commentary, read one Scripture passage; 3) read the commentary on that passage; 4) read the Scripture passage for a second time; 5) at the end of a book, read the conclusion in the TOW commentary. (For purposes of the page count for this course, the Scripture passages count only once, though two readings are recommended.)

Read: All biblical passages identified in the *Theology of Work Bible Commentary*, plus select passages on economics and vocation (found at this link, www.degree.???), [Note: the link is not functional yet.] (1000 pages).

Theology of Work Bible Commentary, Vol 1: Genesis through Deuteronomy. ISBN: 978-1619706606. Hendrickson, 2015. (232 pages)

Theology of Work Bible Commentary, Vol 2: Joshua through Song of Songs. ISBN: 978-1619707092. Hendrickson, 2015. (240 pages)

Theology of Work Bible Commentary, Vol 3: Isaiah through Malachi. ISBN: 978-1619707504.
Hendrickson, 2016. (191 pages)
Theology of Work Bible Commentary, Vol 4: Matthew through Acts. ISBN: 978-1619705265.
Hendrickson, 2014. (220 pages)
Theology of Work Bible Commentary, Vol 5: Romans through Revelation. ISBN: 978-1619705968.
Hendrickson, 2015. (220 pages)

Students are encouraged to consult other biblical commentaries on relevant passages. They are expected to read:

Roberts, Mark D., *Ephesians. The Story of God Bible Commentary.* ISBN: 978-0310327???.
Zondervan, 2016. Chapters 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 15. (160 pages)

Beginning at least 100 days before the course convenes (May 23, 2017 = 100 days before), students will read the *Life for Leaders* daily devotional that is digitally published by the De Pree Center. Mark D. Roberts leads a writing team composed of a diverse group of marketplace and other leaders who write a daily devotional based on Scripture. Subscribe to this devotional and/or read examples here (<http://depree.org/category/life-for-leaders/>). (100 pages)

Work from a Biblical Perspective

Keller, Timothy and Leary Alsdorf, Katherine. *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work.* ISBN: 978-1594632822. Penguin, 2012. (285 pages)
Nelson, Tom. *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work.* ISBN: 978-1433526671.
Crossway, 2011. (226 pages)
Stevens, R. Paul. *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective.* ISBN: 978-0802848000. Eerdmans, 2000. (296 pages)

Economics and Human Flourishing

Bolt, John. *Economic Shalom: A Reformed Primer on Faith, Work, and Human Flourishing.* ISBN: 978-1938948183. Christian's Library Press, 2013. (216 pages)
Claar, Victor V. and Klay, Robin J. *Economics in Christian Perspective: Theory, Policy and Life Choices.* ISBN: 978-0830825974. IVP Academic, 2007. Chaps 1, 5, 9. (72 pages)
Economic Wisdom Project, <http://oikonomianetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Economic-Wisdom-Project-10-2014-small.pdf>. (32 pages)
Twelve Elements of Economic Wisdom, <http://oikonomianetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/TwelveElementsEconomicWisdom8.pdf>. (26 pages)
Willard, Dallas and Black Jr. Gary. *The Divine Conspiracy Continued: Fulfilling God's Kingdom on Earth.* ISBN: 978-0062296122. HarperOne, 2014. (353 pages)
Wright, David. *How God Makes the World a Better Place: A Wesleyan Primer on Faith, Work, and Economic Transformation.* ISBN: 978-1938948176. Christian's Library Press, 2012. (162 pages)

Vocation

Guinness, Os *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life.* ISBN: 978-0849944376. Nelson, 2003. (268 pages)

Labberton, Mark. *Called: The Crisis and Promise of Following Jesus Today*. ISBN: 978-0830836833. IVP Books, 2014. (177 pages)
Theology of Work Project and Messenger, William. *Calling & Vocation: Overview*.
<https://www.theologyofwork.org/key-topics/vocation-overview-article>. (36 pages)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Pre-Seminar (4500 pages of reading; 10 pages of writing)

1. Before beginning the pre-seminar reading and writing, write a one-page (no more) essay in response to Fuller's Central Integration Question: At this point in your journey, how do you envision your call to God's mission in the world?
2. Complete the required reading (4500 pages). Note: because almost half of the reading for this course comes from Scripture and commentary on Scripture, you are strongly urged to spread this reading out over several months, rather than doing it in a short period of time.
3. Write five, one-page reflection essays responding to the question: How is this biblical passage challenging you to think or act differently in your life and/or ministry?
4. Use *Life for Leaders* as a part of your own daily life of biblical reflection and prayer.
5. Write four, one-page reflection essays responding to the question: Where do you disagree with something in the required readings and why?

Post-Seminar (40 pages of writing)

1. Write a 15-page paper that would be suitable for the fictional *Dictionary of the Bible for Thoughtful Christians* on the topic: Work in the Bible.
2. Write a 10-page paper in response to the question: How should the conversation about faith-work, economics, and vocation take shape in your church, given your church's theological, historical, and socio-economic context. If you work in a parachurch ministry, you can write this for your personal congregation or for one of the congregations you serve.
3. In a 10-page paper, write a critical assessment of your own ministry in light of what you have learned about biblical teaching on faith-work, economics, and vocation. The last three pages of this assessment should be aspirational, as you consider how your ministry might change in the future.
4. Write four daily devotions in the format of *Life for Leaders* (400-500 word devotion, plus questions and a closing prayer) (9 pages)
5. As the very last part of your work for this course, write a one-page (no more) essay in response to Fuller's Central Integration Question: At this point in your journey, how do you envision your call to God's mission in the world?