Spiritual Formation and Guidance
GB 5553

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Time: 9/12 & 13 and 10/31 & 11/01 – 8:30-4:30 each day
Place: September weekend – Ezell 301; Oct/Nov weekend – Ezell 363

The primary mission of Lipscomb University is to integrate Christian faith and practice with academic excellence.

Course Description

Christian spiritual formation, the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others, calls all disciples of Jesus to incarnational living. This course identifies how God offers himself and how believers respond through spiritual disciplines, scripture, personal experiences, literature and events. The course is both didactic and experiential in the understanding that in order to develop an intimate relationship with God one must both gain knowledge and experience spiritual transformation.

Primary Audience

This primary audience is graduate students taking the Certificate in Christian Spirituality through the Institute for Christian Spirituality. There are no pre-requisites required.

Course Overview

The goal of the course is two-fold. The first goal is to encourage personal growth toward holy living and spiritual maturity. The format of the course includes inquiry, critical thinking, theological reflection, worship, contemplation, spiritual disciplines, and praxis. On-line discussion, outside work, presentations by the professor, guest lectures (both live
and on video), and class participation (small groups and table conversation) are included during the course. Your observations and wisdom during class discussion provide richness for each class session.

The second goal is to invite students to examine ways in which they can encourage their family, friends and other Christians in the quest to live like Christ. Students will identify their responsibilities as co-laborers with God in spiritually forming others into disciples of Jesus.

**Required Course Reading***


*All books must be read by beginning of course.*

**Course Requirements**

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<tr>
<th>Course competencies</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Desired outcome</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Students will examine biblical principles for living life as disciples of Jesus Christ.</td>
<td>1. Write a reflective essay on your current prayer life and experience a silent retreat and participate in spiritual direction.</td>
<td>1. Class average of 90% on essay and 100% participation in silent retreat and spiritual direction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Students will identify historical streams of spiritual formation lived out in the past 2000 years.</td>
<td>2. Share a classic spiritual discipline in a 30-minute presentation.</td>
<td>2. Average of 90% on presentations based on course rubric.</td>
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### 3. Students will examine the literature of spiritual disciplines and through practicing disciplines this semester will develop lifetime habits of the heart.

### 3. Choose and practice spiritual disciplines throughout the semester and compose a rule of life.

### 3. Offer measurable evidence of identification with average of 80% for class.

### 4. Students will identify and discuss how Scripture, people, contexts, literature, spiritual disciplines, and events have spiritually formed them in the past.

### 4. Share a spiritual autobiography about your life from birth until the present.

### 4. Average of 90% on assignment.

### 5. Students will demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of literature, people, contexts, and events God uses in forming people into mature Christians.

### 5. Write a paper on the topic of “Community as foundational for spiritual formation.”

### 5. Demonstrate comprehension through 90% of class having a passing score (80%) on paper.

### 6. Students will have an opportunity to explore their personal relationship with God with an objective trained individual.

### 6. Students will participate in three sessions of spiritual direction.

### 6. 100% participation in three sessions and a clear articulation of the impact of these sessions.

### 7. Students will identify principles by which to live in an incarnational manner.

### 7. Write a rule of life and develop a curriculum to teach spiritual formation.

### 7. Offer measurable evidence of identification with average of 80% for class.

## Course requirements

### Pre-course

1. **On-line discussion:** Read Nouwen’s book, *The Way of the Heart*, and Benson’s book, *In Constant Prayer* and write a reflective essay (two- to three-pages in length). Both books provide a model for moving contemplative practices to daily practical approaches. The topic of the essay is the ways you have practiced (or failed
to practice) solitude, silence, and prayer in the past year. Write about the benefits you have experienced, or the void you have experienced because of not practicing this habit of the heart. The essay will be the basis for your on-line discussion. You will be required to make three posts. The first will be in response to the discussion prompt placed on-line on Monday, September 1st, and is a statement summarizing the material in the essay (do not post the entire essay). The next two posts will be responses to the posts of your fellow students. See the guidelines on on-line discussion on Blackboard. The essay is due on the September 12th.

2. **Curriculum outline:** Based on the Calhoun and other texts, put together a curriculum on spiritual formation. It is based on a four-month time period and can be for any population. Include a narrative of each session as well as scripture, activities, and references. Creativity is rewarded—think outside of the box. This curriculum is due on September 12th.

3. **Reading:** All course texts must be read before September 12th.

**In-course Requirements**

1. **Spiritual autobiography:** You will share your spiritual autobiography with your classmates on the first day of class. Hand in a copy to the professor—five to six pages in length. Highlight people, events, literature, contexts, and other formative influences in your spiritual journey. Transparency is encouraged, but you, of course, are in control of what you share. It is appropriate to articulate any spiritual struggles as well as your spiritual victories.

2. **Presentation:** A spiritual practice will be chosen from the attached list. You will come prepared to make a 15 to 20-minute presentation of this discipline on the second day of class during the first weekend. Use Foster’s book *Longing for God* and Calhoun’s book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* as two of the sources for preparation. A two- to three-page handout (including references) will be prepared to email to the professor to post on Blackboard. Number of references will vary depending on the chosen topic. It will include one or two of the originators of the discipline along with an explanation of the practice. Contact the professor with the topic in which you are interested before beginning. We will want to have a variety of disciplines covered. Choices will be first-come, first-served basis.

**Spiritual practices:**

- Imaging prayer
- Examen
- Spiritual Exercises (Ignatian)
- Centering prayer
- Praying the hours
- Anglican prayer beads
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Practicing the presence of God
Art as prayer
Music as prayer
Fasting
Lectio Divina
Praying the Psalms
Stations of the Cross
Experiencing God through creation
Journaling
Other (must okay with me)

3. **Paragraphs on disciplines:** Read *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* at the beginning of the semester for the practical suggestions for engaging in spiritual disciplines. Select 3 or 4 spiritual disciplines needed in your life and engage in them during the month between the first and second weekends of class. You will write a paragraph on each of the 3 or 4 disciplines telling why you have selected them from the more than 70 disciplines in Calhoun's book. By nature, many disciples of Jesus allow distractions to crowd out the virtues and practices of Jesus in our lives. The paragraphs are due on October 31st.

4. **Rule of life:** For our last class session, November 1st, you will write and articulate, “A Rule of Life” (*Regula*). Your Rule of Life (“habits of the heart”) should contain spiritual priorities, biblical principles, spiritual practices, as well as intellectual, physical, and relational goals that you desire to incorporate in your walk with God. Rather than write “new year’s resolutions” or produce “spiritual laundry lists” the regula provides principles that form a foundation for your future spiritual growth and formation. It is a covenant with God in which you openly declare your future intentions for spiritual growth and formation. Plan to share your rule with peers on the last day of class. Instead of reading your rule to the group, summarize your future spiritual commitments. This project may find expression in prose, prayer, poem, song, or other ways. You will turn in a two- to three-page explanation of your rule to the professor at the time of your presentation.

5. **Research paper:** Your research paper addresses the importance of community as the context for Christian spiritual formation. The essays included in Powell and Lodahl’s, *Embodyed holiness*, provide you with a foundation on which to build your theology of biblical community. This work should include primary source material (scholarly journals, class books, etc.). Limit your writing to no more than 8-10 pages, double-spaced. Include a bibliography (one source per page). Your research paper is due on the November 28th.

6. **Spiritual direction:** You will experience three sessions with a spiritual director; either in person or by phone. Write a narrative of your experience in 5-6 pages double-spaced. You may find a spiritual director on your own or choose one from a
list of directors in training who will offer their services for free. One of the sessions must be completed by October 1st. The second and third may take place during the remainder of the semester. The narrative is due on November 14th.

7. **Silent retreat:** You are required to take a 48-hour silent retreat before the end of the semester. You may participate in a guided silent retreat at a retreat center or may do a self-guided retreat with the retreat guide available on Blackboard. A 5-6 page double-spaced personal reflection of this experience is due on December 5th.

### Course Grading

- **Spiritual Autobiography**: ...................................................................................... 10%
- **Curriculum**: ............................................................................................................. 15%
- **Essay on Benson’s and Nouwen’s books**: .............................................................. 10%
- **Presentation**: .......................................................................................................... 15%
- **Paragraphs on Spiritual Disciplines**: .................................................................... 10%
- **Research Paper**: ...................................................................................................... 10%
- **Rule of Life**: ............................................................................................................ 10%
- **Spiritual direction**: .................................................................................................. 10%
- **Silent retreat**: ......................................................................................................... 10%

Grading for the course will be:

- 92-100 A  
- 83-91 B  
- 74-82 C  
- 65-73 D

### Additional Notes:

1. **Internet/Web Surfing/Texting:** Class lectures and small groups are a vital time of interaction with the material and the community that is the class as a whole. As a result, the use of laptops for surfing the internet, checking e-mail, playing games, checking Facebook, etc. is not allowed. Text messaging or similar communications are not allowed for the same reason.

2. **Students requiring accommodations:** If you require classroom accommodations for a documented disability, please discuss your circumstances with me immediately. If you are entitled to accommodations but have not yet registered with the Academic Success Center at (615.966.1052) or brian.mast@lipscomb.edu.
3. **Attendance:** Attendance during each day of the course is critical. Please arrive on time, honor break schedules, and stay for the full day. Excused absences include: 1. death of family member, 2. school sponsored trip, or 3. illness (nurse or doctor excuse).

4. **Academic dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Please refer to the university's *Code of Conduct* ([http://campuslife.lipscomb.edu/content.asp?SID=41&CID=306](http://campuslife.lipscomb.edu/content.asp?SID=41&CID=306)) and the Academic Integrity Policy ([http://academics.lipscomb.edu/content.asp?CID=2762&SID=12](http://academics.lipscomb.edu/content.asp?CID=2762&SID=12)). The student who is in violation of this policy will receive an F on the work or may receive an F in the course.

5. **Behavior:** Class behaviors are in accordance with LU's student handbook. All inappropriate or unethical classroom behavior will be handled in the manner specified in the student handbook.

6. **Late policy:** Assignments are due on the dates assigned by the beginning of class. Late assignments grades are reduced by 10% for each calendar day they are late.