The Benefits of Seminary Education

Rev. Michael E. Reese

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 Timothy 2:15).

It has been said that life is like an onion; we grow layer by layer. Paul exhorts Timothy to be a student of the Word of God and I have personally experienced and witnessed many times the powerful contributions theological education makes to effective ministry. Prior to my Seminary experience, I lacked the tools and training necessary for an effective ministry. At Birmingham Theological Seminary I have been bountifully blessed and richly rewarded from this experience. I have also been equipped and encouraged to apply these practical principles to my ministry at the New Zion Missionary Baptist Church in the City of Bessemer. This training helped inspire in me a plan, purpose and passion for progress, getting the church involved in the overall goal of winning the lost to Jesus Christ. BTS is a ministry training program that focuses on equipping all who desire to reproduce.

Preaching is the minister’s primary calling. He is called to preach from the Bible and the Bible is, to quote J. I. Packer, a “very big book.” Therefore, it takes a certain amount of learning to understand the history, theology, background, and proper application of God’s Word. Preaching is first and foremost a preparation in the Scriptures and then a proclamation of the Scriptures.

Seminary provides the tools to mine the gold of the Gospel, the truths of God’s Word necessary “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). Oswald Chambers wrote: “If a man lets his garden alone, it very soon ceases to be a garden; and if a saint lets his mind alone, it will soon become a rubbish heap for Satan to make use of.”

I think apart from formal training, one risks slipping into theological imbalance, error, or even heresy. A well-meaning, but untrained pastor, might fall into doctrinal error or heresy and take his congregation with him. And therefore, tremendous problems can arise in a church as a result...
of a lack of theological education among its leadership. Thus, the minister’s error may have far-reaching implications.

There are many benefits to be had through self-study, but it can never replace the sort of community which exists between professors and students in classroom experience. Seminaries will not “gift” a person but seminaries can almost always enhance the gifts God has given to a person. I believe seminary is a wonderful thing that helps train pastors and parishioners to fulfill their calling as faithful servants of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We give God our best when personal faith and innate abilities are combined with serious study and comprehensive preparation for ministry. And why wouldn’t we seek to give God only our very best?

Jesus said in Matthew 22:37, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Don’t forget about the mind because theology, I think, is loving God with your mind. Your mind is like the hard-drive on a computer, therefore, you have to download the software of the Gospel. But you also have to download an antivirus protection to prevent you from picking up a false-doctrinal virus. We not only have a devotion to God but we also have a duty to our fellowman.

This seminary curriculum will train you to “rightly divide the Word of truth,” to think and live biblically and theologically and to proclaim His truth boldly to people everywhere in fulfillment of the Great Commission. I do believe that you can be a very effective pastor without seminary, however, I think that it is a critical step for a pastor that desires to impact the world for Christ to understand that the correct interpretation of Scripture is the best source for understanding life. Seminary really sets you up for a lifetime of learning.

DISTANCE EDUCATION ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brandon Robbins, BTS Director of Distance Education, has been working diligently on the distance education program and materials. New Testament I and II, and Old Testament I, II and III all have new, updated syllabi. The new syllabi are organized to aid students in knowing when to take exams and what to study. Study guides are also now provided.

Another change is that we will no longer include the syllabi on the CD-ROMs. Students will receive the syllabi in the registration confirmation e-mail.

The Old and New Testament courses are some of our most popular courses, and we hope these changes will aid students in their studies.

For more information on the distance education program, contact the BTS office at 776-5356.
 Extensions campus students may consider taking a distance education course over the summer. For more information, visit our website at www.birminghamseminary.org. You may also contact the office to discuss the possibility of a directed study.

Courses will not be offered this summer in Demopolis, Montgomery, or Huntsville.
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PHONE: (Home): ___________________ (Work) _______________ (Cell) ______________ EMAIL: ____________________________

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Fees: M.A. Application Fee $30 (one time) • Tuition $100 per M.A./Cert. credit hr.; $150 per DMIN credit hr. $40 per audit hr. • Late Fee: $25 per course after June 8 • Annual Student ID: $15

By completing and signing this form, I am registering for the above courses and agree to pay all tuition and fees.

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Graduation

The Graduation ceremony is on May 17th at 7:00 PM in the Briarwood Presbyterian Church Worship Center in Birmingham, followed by a reception.

Dr. Frank M. Barker, Jr., BTS Chancellor and Chairman of the Board, will be the commencement speaker. Dr. Barker is also Pastor Emeritus of Briarwood Presbyterian Church and long-time professor of Old Testament and Evangelism. Come support our 2013 graduates!

If you are planning to graduate in 2014, please inform the registrar at jhamamatsu@briarwood.org or 776-5354.