



SYLLABUS

Practical Theology: The Pursuit of God in All of Life

Eight five hour seminars, one ten hour seminar
Occasional Fridays 7:00-9:00 PM;
Saturdays 9:00 AM-Noon (see specific dates below)
September 2005-May 2007
(Four Semester Units)

I. Course Description

This course is designed to acquaint students with the practical application of Christian doctrine to a wide variety of issues. The course addresses such issues as fighting personal sin, prayer and fasting, roles of men and women, suffering, worship, God's sovereignty, eldership, inspiration of Scripture, and motivation for life and ministry. Students will be urged not only to consider the biblical underpinnings for these issues, but how to apply them to every-day life.

II. Course Objectives

Practical Theology aims to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples. We pray that honest, humble, rigorous interpretation of Biblical texts, as well as God-centered discussion of theological and practical ministry issues will kindle this passion and equip students to spread it winsomely to others.

Thus it is our aim that the student who successfully completes the course in Practical Theology will be better equipped to:

- savor, strengthen, and spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all of life and ministry;
- meet a wide range of needs in people's lives with a loving and powerful application of Biblical truth;
- apply Biblical doctrine to the nitty-gritty of life and ministry

III. Required Textbooks

- The Bible (Bring your GNT and NAS95 or ESV)
- Wayne Grudem and John Piper, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, Crossway, 1991.
- John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, Multnomah Press, 2003.
- John Piper, *A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer*, Crossway Books, 1997.
- John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, Baker Book House, 1993.
- John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*, Baker Books, 2003.
- John Piper, *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God*, Multnomah, 2000.
- John Piper, *The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in FUTURE GRACE*, Multnomah Press, 1995.
- Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995.
- *T.U.L.I.P. What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, Bethlehem Baptist Church Staff, 1985 (available from DGM or online at www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/doctrines_grace/tulip.html)
- Various articles to be supplied.

Supplementary Reading:

- Either Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God, The Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, Zondervan, 1989; or: Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Openness of God*, InterVarsity Press, 1994; or: Gregory Boyd, *God at War: the Bible and Spiritual Conflict*, InterVarsity Press, 1997; or: Greg Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, InterVarsity Press, 2001; or: John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*, InterVarsity Press, 1998; or Norman Geisler, *Chosen But Free* (Bethany, 2001). Or some other approved book from a different conviction.
- Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles : A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible*, 1985; Or: Stanley J. Grenz with Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*, 1995; Or: Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*, 1997.

IV. Course Requirements:

Practical Theology consists of nine seminars on specific topics. Each seminar has its own requirements and descriptions. Students are expected to attend all sessions of each seminar. Papers and reading logs should be turned into Dustin Shramek (Pastor John's teaching assistant). The professor reserves the right to change assignments before the seminar.

1. Living by Faith in Future Grace: The Pursuit of Holiness in Life and Ministry (September 16-17, 2005 @ Mounds View Campus)

This seminar is designed to summarize, reinforce, and further explain the life and ministry implications of Christian Hedonism and the underlying vision of God as put forth in *The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in FUTURE GRACE*. We will explore in depth the relationship between faith and “the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews. 12:14). How does “faith work through love” (Galatians 5:6)? What is the nature of saving faith? How does faith in future grace overcome the sins of regret, lust, covetousness, anger, etc.? What is wrong with the “gratitude ethic?” The seminar will include presentation and time for questions and answers.

Requirements:

- Read John Piper, *The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in FUTURE GRACE*.
 - Read Thomas Chalmers, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection” (available from Connie Kopischke in the TBI Office).
 - Read Mark Karlberg's critique of *Future Grace* (“John Piper on the Christian Life”; available from Connie Kopischke) and write your response to it in an Adler fashion stating his concerns fairly and giving your assessment of his position. Write this as if explaining to an uninitiated person who has never heard of Covenant Theology or *Future Grace*. In the first part state the essential positions of Karlberg and Piper, and then what Karlberg faults in *Future Grace* and then your assessment of Karlberg's position. Length between five and ten double-spaced pages. The paper is due by **October 24, 2005**.
 - If possible pick out a real relative or friend who you know is struggling with some sin, and write them a letter of encouragement, rebuke, counsel or whatever you think is needed based on the approach of the “Application” Chapters in *Future Grace*. If you don't agree with the approach of Future Grace, or you don't have anyone you know, then write to an imaginary friend and simply demonstrate that you understand how Piper *thinks* faith in future grace has purifying power. This may be in the neighborhood of three double-spaced pages more or less. This paper is due by **October 17, 2005**.
 - Turn in a verification with the paper that you have read the assigned readings and that you attended the sessions.
- #### 2. Why We Believe the Bible: The Pursuit of Truth (November 4-5, 2005 @ Mounds View Campus)

Why is the doctrine of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture both biblical and crucial for our understanding of Christian life and mission? How does one argue for the authority of Scripture without falling into the circular argument of merely quoting 2 Timothy 3:16? This seminar is designed to explore the multi-layered evidences for the absolute trustworthiness of the Bible and to secure its appropriate place in the devotional, study, and ministry life of the Christian. The seminar will include presentation and ample time for questions and answers.

Requirements:

- Read John Piper, *Desiring God*, Appendix Two: “Is the Bible a Reliable Guide to Lasting Joy?”
- Read Wayne Grudem, “Scripture’s Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture” from the book *Scripture and Truth* (available from Connie Kopschke in the BBC office).
- Read Chapters 7 and 8 of Daniel Fuller, *Hermeneutics*, 1983. Write a 1-3 page response paper to this historical argument for the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. The paper is due by **November 28, 2005**.
- Turn in a verification with the paper that you have read the assigned readings in *Desiring God*; *Scripture and Truth*; and *Hermeneutics*, and that you attended the sessions.

3. **T.U.L.I.P.: The Pursuit of God’s Glory in Salvation** (February 17-18 AND 24-25, 2006 @ Downtown Campus)

Who initiates faith? Who sustains faith through the afflictions of this life? Who gets all the glory in salvation? This seminar is designed to communicate in a sensitive and pastoral way the essence of the Calvinistic view of the doctrine of salvation and to show how the Reformed understanding of this precious doctrine is rooted in the careful study of Scripture and is valuable in the life and ministry of the church. Our interest is not so much in what John Calvin thought about predestination, but first and foremost what Jesus, Paul, Moses, Isaiah, Peter, Luke and the rest of the Biblical writers taught in Scripture. We will try not to avoid difficult texts. We will aim to represent fairly the Arminian side of the argument which stresses the free will of man. The seminar will include presentation and time for questions and answers.

Requirements:

- Read *T.U.L.I.P What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*.
- Read one of the books listed (either Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God, The Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, Zondervan, 1989; or: Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Openness of God*, InterVarsity Press, 1994; or: Gregory Boyd, *God at War: the Bible and Spiritual Conflict*, InterVarsity Press, 1997; or: Greg Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, InterVarsity Press, 2001; or: John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*, InterVarsity Press, 1998; or Norman Geisler, *Chosen But Free* (Bethany, 2001). Or some other approved book from a different conviction) and write a 5 (double-spaced, 12-point font) page paper noting the argument against Calvinism that seems most compelling in the book and providing your best response to that argument. Turn in by **March 20, 2006**.
- Read Chapters 2 and 5 of *The Pleasures of God*.
- Read Chapters 3, 10, 11 of *The Justification of God*.
- Turn in a verification with the paper that you have read the assigned readings and that you attended the sessions.

4. **Sexual Complementarity: The Pursuit of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood** (March 17-18, 2006, taught by Wayne Grudem @ Downtown Campus)

What does God have to do with sexuality? What is His purpose for creating us male and female? This seminar is designed to explore the biblical teachings regarding maleness and femaleness and the implications of sexuality for leadership in the church and home. The Complementarian view, which understands there to be distinct but equally valuable roles for men and women in the church and home, will be explained and defended as Biblical and therefore good for us. We will endeavor to treat the egalitarian alternative with fairness, and not avoid difficult texts or questions. The seminar will include presentation and time for questions and answers.

Requirements:

- Turn in a reading log showing that student has read Chapters One, Two and Twenty-Six of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, and The Danvers Statement found on pages 469-471 of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*; and an equal amount (of time or pages) in Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, Grenz, *Women in the Church*, or Groothuis, *Good News for Women*. Permission may be sought from the seminar leader to replace one of these three books with other egalitarian books.
- Write a 5-10 page (12 point, double spaced) position paper on some aspect of the disagreement between Egalitarianism and Complementarianism giving the best arguments on both sides of the particular issue and showing why the student takes the position he does. The focus of the paper should be cleared with the seminar leader. The position paper must be turned in by **April 24, 2006**.
- Turn in a verification with the paper that you have read the assigned readings and that you attended the sessions.

5. **Biblical Eldership** (TBD 2006-2007)

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do” (1 Timothy 3:1). This seminar is designed for men who aspire to the office of overseer or elder and for those who are currently serving as elders. It also aims to help men and women who are not called to the eldership to understand the nature of New Testament church government and how we try to implement it at Bethlehem. The Biblical foundations of the church, the principles of church governance, the nature of the eldership and the qualification of elders will be examined from Scripture. Though this training alone does not qualify one to serve as an elder, it is a step in the process of becoming an elder. The seminar will include presentation and ample time for questions and answers

Requirements:

- Turn in a reading log showing that the student has read at least 10 hours of Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*.
- Write a 1-3 page response to the Strauch book or the presentation to express your present position on any of the eldership issues raised. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate your understanding of the material and why you do or do not find yourself in agreement with the vision presented, especially as to whether it is faithful to Scripture. The paper is due by TBD.

Suggested Supplemental Reading

- Mark Dever, ed., *Baptist Polity* (<http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/library/polity/>)
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (relevant chapters on ecclesiology)

6. **Desiring God: The Pursuit of Joy in Life and Ministry** (TBD 2006-2007)

This particular seminar is designed to summarize, reinforce, and further explain the life and ministry implications of Christian Hedonism and the underlying vision of God as put forth in *Desiring God: The Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. If God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him, then how should we live and minister? How should we motivate ourselves and others when it comes to prayer, love, marriage, money, missions, reading Scripture, etc.? The seminar will include lectures and time for questions and answers.

Requirements:

- Read *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, Multnomah, 2003
- Read the critique of Christian Hedonism in Richard Mouw, *The God Who Commands*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1990, pp. 22-42 ([photocopy available, with publisher's permission, through Connie Kopischke).
- Read Piper's response to Mouw entitled "A Response to Richard Mouw's Treatment of Christian Hedonism," May 28, 1993 (available online at http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/christian_hedonism/mouw.html).
- Read Peter Masters' article, "Christian Hedonism: Is It Right?" It is available from Connie in the church office, or online at http://smileyguy2.blogspot.com/2002_12_08_smileyguy2_archive.html.
- Write a five-six page (typed double-spaced) response to this article. Be sure to restate Masters' view fairly so that he would approve of that part of the paper and then give your assessment of his argument both positive and negative. The paper is due TBD.
- Turn in a verification with the paper that you have read the assigned readings and that you attended the sessions.

7. **Gravity and Gladness on Sunday Morning: The Pursuit of God in Corporate Worship** (offered 2006-2007)

All of life is to be understood as worship (Romans 12:1-2). But there is a special place in Scripture for corporate worship. What can be done so that people who walk into our worship services will "fall on [their faces] and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you" (1 Corinthians 14:25)? To enjoy the tangible presence of God is the longing of every human heart. But it's not a flippant joy. It is a trembling joy, a serious joy, full of gravity and gladness. This seminar is designed to communicate a biblical vision of the supremacy of God in corporate worship, not only for us, but also for our neighbors and for the nations. The seminar will include presentation and time for questions and answers. It is assumed that assigned selections from *Desiring God* and *Let the Nations Be Glad* will be read in conjunction with the seminar.

Requirements:

- Turn in a reading log showing that students have read chapters 1 and 7 in *Let the Nations Be Glad*, and chapter 3 in *Desiring God*.
- Write a paper of about 1,000 words arguing for your position on the use of hymns and or contemporary worship songs and any other styles of congregational singing in worship. Pose clearly the question you are trying to answer, and then use Scripture where you can to explain and support your answer. Assume any kind of church setting you wish. Try to make this as realistic and helpful to your own future as you can. The paper is due TBD.

8. **Prayer, Meditation and Fasting: The Pursuit of Communion with God** (TBD 2006-2007)

The source of joy and power in the Christian life ultimately springs from a vital, daily communion with God. What does it mean to hunger for God, to feed on God? Jesus said, "I have food to eat that you do not know about" (John 4:32). What is this food? This seminar is designed to teach on the biblical disciplines of prayer, meditation and fasting from the radically God-

centered, Christian hedonistic point of view taught in the Scriptures. The life-transforming power unleashed by the faith-motivated, grace-filled pursuit of these disciplines will be celebrated and – God willing – the roots of legalism will be severed. The seminar will include presentation and time for questions and answers.

Requirements:

- Read John Piper, *A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer* (Crossway Books, 1997).
- Imagine yourself as a new associate pastor in a church that has never fasted or thought about fasting. You and the lead pastor agree to have a week of fasting (one meal a day, two meals a day, all meals, whatever) to seek “all the fullness of God” (Ephesians. 3:19). He invites you to take ten minutes at the beginning of the service the Sunday before the week of fasting – only ten minutes! The aim of the message is to motivate the people to participate in a discipline and a pursuit that for most of them will be a first time experience. Write a paper that would be this ten-minute message. Turn it in by TBD.
- Turn in a verification with the paper that you have read the assigned readings and that you attended the sessions.

9. Suffering for the Sake of the Body: The Pursuit of People through Pain (TBD 2006-2007)

What does Paul mean when he says, “I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions?” Is your vision of God and your understanding of the biblical theology of suffering sufficient to sustain you if (when!) God calls you to suffer for the sake of His Name both here on the home front or perhaps on the mission field? This seminar is designed to prepare you for such suffering and to help you “count it all joy.”

Requirements:

- Turn in a reading log with the letter showing that students have read chapter 3 in *Let the Nations Be Glad* and chapter 10 in *Desiring God*.
- Write a 1-3 page letter to someone who has experienced some real suffering, using pastoral sensitivity and Biblical insight to bring truth-based, faith-sustaining, Christ-exalting comfort. The person may be real (preferably) or imagined. The letter and the reading log are due by TBD.

V. Assessment

The student’s grade for *Practical Theology* will be based on seminar attendance, certification that the required reading was done, writing assignments, plus any relevant dialogues that happen between the instructor and the student. The grade is not based on agreement with the instructor, but on the clarity and coherence and competent foundations of the views put forth.

GRADING: Apart from special petition for credit/no-credit status, grading will follow typical standards where A = exceptional performance; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = inadequate performance for credit.

GRADING SCALE:	A+	99-100	C+	83-84	D+	75-76
	A	95-98	C	79-82	D	71-74
	A-	93-94	C-	77-78	D-	69-70
	B+	91-92			F	0-68
	B	87-90				
	B-	85-86				

(Note: Apart from extraordinary circumstances and the permission of the professor late assignments will be deducted 1% for each day the assignment is late.)

VI. Schedule

Seminar	Assignment	Date or Date Due
Future Grace		September 16-17, 2005
	Read <i>Future Grace</i> (~400 pages)	October 24, 2005
	Read and Respond to Karlberg Critique	October 24, 2005
	Letter to a friend about battling sin	October 17, 2005
Why We Believe the Bible		November 4-5, 2005
	Read Wayne Grudem, "Scripture's Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture" from the book <i>Scripture and Truth</i>	November 28, 2005
	Read John Piper, <i>Desiring God</i> , Appendix Two: "Is the Bible a Reliable Guide to Lasting Joy?"	November 28, 2005
	Read Chapters 7 and 8 of Daniel Fuller, <i>Hermeneutics</i> , 1983.	
	Write response to Fuller article	November 28, 2005
TULIP		February 17-18 & 24-25, 2006
	Read <i>Pleasures of God</i> , chs. 2 & 5 (~ 40 pages)	March 20, 2006
	Read Chapters 3, 10, 11 of <i>The Justification of God</i> .	March 20, 2006
	Read <i>T.U.L.I.P What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism</i>	March 20, 2006
	Read Open Theist or Arminian Book (~250 pages)	March 20, 2006
	Write Critique of Book	March 20, 2006
Sexual Complementarity		March 17-18, 2006
	Read chapters 1, 2, and 26 of <i>RBMW</i> (~100 pages)	April 24, 2006
	Read Egalitarian Book	April 24, 2006
	Write Position Paper on Issue	April 24, 2006
Biblical Eldership		2006-2007
	Review Strauch	2006-2007
	Response paper to Strauch	2006-2007
Desiring God		2006-2007
	Read <i>Desiring God</i> (~350 pages)	2006-2007
	Read Mouw, Piper, and Master's dialogue on Christian Hedonism	2006-2007
	Write response to Master's article.	2006-2007
Gravity and Gladness		2006-2007
	Read chapters 1 and 7 in <i>Let the Nations be Glad</i>	2006-2007
	Read chapter 3 in <i>Desiring God</i>	2006-2007
	Paper on worship style	2006-2007
Prayer & Fasting		
	Read <i>Hunger for God</i> (~200 pages)	2006-2007
	Write 10 minute presentation	2006-2007
Suffering for the Sake of the Body		2006-2007
	Read chapter 3 in <i>Let the Nations be Glad</i>	2006-2007
	Read chapter 10 in <i>Desiring God</i>	2006-2007
	Letter to someone who is suffering	2006-2007