Introduction to Spiritual Formation (Spring 2016)

I. Purpose of the Course

This course is designed to give students an introductory overview of the dynamics involved in the formation of mature character in the life of the Christian leader. The thesis of the course is that a Christian leader must lead from character before skill. This course will help students: 1) Develop a theological approach to spiritual growth and renewal (Sanctification); and, 2) Experience the transforming power of the gospel through applying theological truths related to the Gospel of God’s grace to their lives and ministries. Special focus will be placed on the application of the practical theology of English Puritans (1550–1700) such as John Owen and Richard Baxter.

II. Course Objectives

A Mind for Truth: Deepening Your Understanding

- To understand and articulate a biblical theology of personal, spiritual growth and renewal, especially as it relates to the centrality of the Gospel.
- To understand the biblical imperative for personal holiness and the priority of ongoing spiritual growth and renewal in the life of the church leader today.
- To understand the biblical nature of the Gospel’s transforming power, especially as it relates to the fulfillment of the Great Commission to “make disciples of all nations”.
- To understand, evaluate critically and appreciate various principles, methods and models used today to help people grow spiritually.
- To be acquainted with the extensive literature relating to personal, spiritual growth and renewal and to be able to think biblically and critically about how it can be used properly and effectively in the student’s life and ministry.

A Heart for God: Transforming Your Affections

- To experience personal, spiritual growth and renewal through the transforming power of the Gospel.
- To diagnose and repent from the core idols (sin beneath the sin) that draw the student’s heart affections away from Christ.
- To appropriate the transforming pardon and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through setting the student’s heart affections on Him alone by faith.
- To show love for God and others by loving God’s Law, obeying it by God’s grace and allowing it to lead the student to Jesus Christ for transformation into His image.
- To practice spiritual disciplines (such as meditating on Scripture, prayer, journaling, fasting, witnessing, etc.) as a means of setting the student’s heart affection on Christ.
- To have a heartfelt burden and lifelong commitment to pray and work for a local, national and global spiritual awakening through multiplying churches that are multiplying disciples through the power of the Gospel.
- To be used by God as an agent of personal, spiritual growth and renewal in the lives of others.
A Life for Ministry: Developing Your Behaviors

- To lay a strong foundation for future studies in the dynamics of how the Gospel brings spiritual growth and renewal both personally and corporately.
- To lay a strong foundation for the practical development of church based ministries of spiritual growth and renewal, especially for those planning to be church planters, pastors and missionaries.
- To obtain a set of criteria for evaluating spiritual growth and renewal principles, methods, materials, programs and trends.

III. Course Format

This course is scheduled to be taught in 13 three-hour classroom sessions from 9:00 AM-12PM beginning Thursday, February 4th, 2016 and ending Thursday, May 5th, 2016. Class will NOT meet on Thursday, March 24th, 2016 for Spring Break. Classroom sessions may include: lecture (including guest lecturers), class interaction, student reports and presentations, video presentations, self-study exercises, motivation activities, and small group sharing. Occasionally, individual and small group work sessions may be conducted during the class time.

Blended Learning: This course will integrate Hybrid-Blended Adult Education (androgogy) learning principles and methods. This will include a blending of classroom and web-based learning, leveraging the strengths of each (e.g. a Flipped Classroom) Course content will be learning using web-based platforms (including interactive videos of the professor’s lectures, online student exercises, discussion forums, etc.) so that classroom time can be used more for professor-student interaction, discussion, and practical application of the course concepts to the student’s personal life and ministry. There will be 12 online lessons taken by the student during these 13 weeks, with lesson 1 being due on week 2, lesson 2 being due on week 3, etc.

Required Use of Social Media and Applications: Because of the nature of this course, students are required to own (or have access to) a laptop computer (not merely a tablet, e.g. iPad) in order to work on assignments during and after class meetings. Students must be familiar with: 1) using the internet (email, browsing, forum-posting, searching, downloading, uploading, etc.), 2) using Microsoft Word (or Pages), Microsoft PowerPoint (or Keynote), and converting files to PDF (Adobe) documents for uploading weekly assignments. Students may only use tablets if they can prove (to the TA) the tablet does not limit their ability to complete all assignments.

Office Hours: You can schedule an appointment with me through my administrative assistant, Joyce Sisler, at 407-366-9493 x219 or jsisler@rts.edu. Appointments are usually scheduled by Joyce for Thursdays from 1:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. The course teaching assistant, Tim Inman, can be reached at 919-902-0513 or tim@pathwaylearning.org.

IV. Course Texts

Required:
- Articles for this reader will be handed out during class throughout the semester.


\[\text{References}\]


\[\text{For other spiritual formation resources, please see the Course Bibliography—separate document.}\]
V. Course Requirements

A. Attendance and Class Participation (10%)

This course requires attendance and participation. Class lectures and discussions will be based on the assumption that you have completed all of the assigned readings.

Note: Class will begin promptly at 9:00 AM. Tardiness, unexcused absence and/or lack of class participation will significantly impact the final grade.

B. Spiritual Formation Reading & Reports (20%)

You are required to read thoughtfully (not simply skim) the following books and articles in their entirety, and submit a report on each book by the date indicated:

3. Excerpts from *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer (Chapters 15, 18 and, 19 from above book) April 14, 2016
4. Excerpts from *The Quest for Godliness* by J. I. Packer (Chapters 2-4, 7, 10-16, 19 from above book) April 14, 2016

For each book above, students are required to write a one-page reading report in the style and format of the Reading Report Form in this syllabus. The excerpted readings from Packer’s *Knowing God* and *The Quest for Godliness* should be treated as one (1) book report.

For the *Spiritual Formation Reader Articles* (#6 above), there will be a question answered regarding your percentage and depth of reading of the Articles. These articles will be made available during the semester. They will be referenced throughout the lectures and are critical for a complete understanding of the course content.

Reports not submitted on the due dates will be considered late.

Particular articles will be assigned each week in preparation for the following week’s in-class discussion. These articles are designed to help the student interact with the major course theses. Each week the students are to be prepared to share a summary of their deepened understanding, heart reaction and behavioral application resulting from careful interaction with the article topic.

***One copy of Packer’s *Rediscovering Holiness* is on reserve in the RTS Orlando library.
C. Spiritual Formation (Gospel Promise) Presentations (20%)
Each student will participate in the development and presentation of at least one (two max) “Gospel Promise” Presentation. The outline of these presentations (list of questions to be answered) is in the appendix of this syllabus. These presentations will include the topics below (20 minutes):

April 7, 2016 Election
April 7, 2016 Propitiation
April 14, 2016 Justification
April 14, 2016 Adoption
April 21, 2016 Regeneration
April 21, 2016 Redemption
April 28, 2016 Sanctification
April 28, 2016 Glorification

D. Spiritual Retreat Report (20%)
The student will set aside a minimum of 4 hours (one morning, afternoon or evening), following class #7 (March 27) and before class #13 (May 5), to be alone with God for the purpose of focused spiritual reflection, evaluation, scripture meditation and prayer in light of the biblical concepts studied in the course regarding the transforming power of the Gospel. The student is encouraged to see this time as an example of how a Christian leader makes time for ordering his/her private world in the face of many competing time demands. A minimum 2 -page, typed Spiritual Retreat Report, recording a) how the retreat was conducted and b) key insights gained, is due on the last day of class, May 5th, 2016. Students will be encouraged to share their retreat insights with the class during the course.

E. Weekly Online Lessons—Substituting for Final Exam and Paper (30%)
You are required to complete a weekly online lesson including interactive video lectures by Dr. Childers and learning exercises such as:

• Assessments (quizzes on video lectures, readings, etc. equivalent to a Final Exam
• Lesson Summaries (approximately 200 words. Equivalent to a Final Paper)
• Discussion Forums

Important Note: In order to receive full credit for the Weekly Online Lessons, especially the weekly online Assessments (Quizzes), Lesson Summaries, and Discussion Forum responses, you must demonstrate in writing a genuine, serious interaction with the concepts in all of these steps. Cursory and superficial answers, replies, and summaries will negatively impact your grade.
VI. Grading

Grades will be assigned according to the RTS grading system: 100-97=A, 96-94=A-, 93-91=B+, 90-88=B, 87-86=B-, 85-83=C+, 82-80=C, 79-78=C-, 77-75=D+, 74-72=D, 71-70=D-, below 70=F.

Late Assignments and Class Attendance Policy
Please do not ask the teaching assistant or Dr. Childers for permission to turn in an assignment late. All late assignments will automatically be penalized. If you have truly been providentially hindered from completing an assignment on time (such as a death in the immediate family), turn in a written request (to the teaching assistant) asking to wave the late penalty with the assignment. Please discuss any such special circumstances with the teaching assistant.

This course affirms that community growth and learning are fundamental components of spiritual formation. Therefore, class attendance and group participation is essential for the completion of this course. Lack of attendance and/or participation will significantly impact the final grade.

Course Grades will be determined as follows:
- Attendance and Participation (10%)
- Spiritual Formation Reading and Reports (20%)
- Gospel Promise Presentation (20%)
- Miscellanies Journal and Spiritual Retreat Report (20%)
- Weekly Online Lessons (30%)

NOTE: No Mid-Term and No Final Exam!
READING REPORT GUIDELINES

Your Name
Course Title & Number
Professor
Date

Title of Book
Complete Bibliographic Reference

Overview—Give a brief overview of the book, including its theme, perspective and approach.

Critique—Offer a brief critique of the book, including elements of strength and weakness.

Application—Offer some specific application to your own ministry— demonstrating the value and relevance of the material in this book.

Best Quote—Be sure to include the page number where the quote can be found.

Did you read the entire book thoughtfully (not merely skimmed)? Yes ___ No ___ % Read (0-100) ___
Spiritual Formation Class Project

What: 20 (30 max) Minute Presentation

Doctrinal Topic: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Presentation Format:

• Expounding: What does it mean?

• Applying: How does it relate/apply to life?

• Experiencing: How does it lead to worship?

• Worship: Hymns, Psalms, Spiritual Songs, etc.
Confidential Student Information

Please fill out and turn in at the first class.

Name:

Spouse name:

Children, name(s) and age(s):

RTS degree program/emphasis:

Years at RTS-Orlando:

Church presently attending:

Denomination background (Southern Baptist, PCA, etc.):

Desired future ministry role (pastor, church planter, missionary, counselor, etc.):

What are your expectations of the course? What would you like to learn?

What is a specific, personal prayer request you would like the professor to be remembering in prayer for you this semester?
## Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Introduction to Spiritual Formation, 2PT702  
Professor: Dr. Steven L. Childers  
Campus: Orlando

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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| **Articulation (oral & written)** | Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. | Strong | 1. Student will be in a group and prepare presentations on reading materials and class discussions.  
2. Student submits an entire portfolio, from which they can teach in the future. |
| **Scripture** | Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.) | Minimal | 1. Student does not engage with Scripture in the original languages.  
2. Student must demonstrate that their understanding of Spiritual Formation is biblical. |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Moderate | Student reads various articles by Reformed authors |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Strong | 1. Student will practice spiritual discipline (such as meditating on Scripture, prayer, journaling, fasting, witnessing, etc.) as a means of setting the student’s heart affection on Christ.  
2. Student will understand, evaluate critically and appreciate various principles methods and models used today to help people grow spiritually.  
3. Students will become acquainted with the extensive literature relating to personal, spiritual growth and renewal and be able to think biblically and critically about how it can be used properly and effectively in the student’s life and ministry. |
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<tr>
<th>Desire for Worldview</th>
<th>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Student gains a deep understanding of a biblical theology of personal, spiritual growth and renewal, especially as it relates to the centrality of the Gospel.</th>
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<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Student reads articles and books by authors that are not Reformed, and is shown the value of ecumenicalism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>None</td>
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| Shepherd             | Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide. | Strong | 1. This course will lay a strong foundation for the student to engage in future studies in the dynamics of how the Gospel brings spiritual growth and renewal both personally and corporately.  
2. Student will work in groups and lead a class presentation(s). |
| Church/World         | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Strong | 1. This course will lay a strong foundation for the practical development of church based ministries of spiritual growth and renewal, especially for students planning to be church planters, pastors and missionaries.  
2. Student will obtain a set of criteria for evaluating spiritual growth and renewal principles, methods, materials, programs and trends. |