Reformed Theological Seminary

Abuse and the Church

Summer 2020

Instructor: Justin S. Holcomb

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Schedule: Summer A (June 8 to July 3, 2020)

There will be seven live Zoom sessions on June 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 29 from 2-4pm ET. Twelve hours of lectures will be recorded and posted on the Canvas page for the course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores how to prevent, recognize, and respond to sexual and domestic abuse. Specifically, it will focus on how to minister to those who are victims of abuse, how to respond to perpetrators of abuse, how to respond in a crisis, and how to build a healthy church culture before there is a particular crisis.

This course will be a study of various forms of violence and abuse and the theological and practical implications of the Gospel for these topics. We will investigate sexual assault and domestic violence to better understand each issue as well as the prevalence of the issue and effects on victims. We will explore the how the Gospel offers help, hope, and healing to victims. This course will focus on theological engagement and practical engagement.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

For the student to understand the numerous dimensions of sexual assault and domestic abuse.

For students to be aware of the scope of the problems of sexual assault and domestic violence and to be aware of the prevalence and effects for victims.

For the student to be able to formulate a theology of violence and abuse.

For students to understand how the theological subjects of the Gospel lay a foundation for how biblical themes affect how we view violence and abuse.

For students to be able to relate major themes of Christian theology to violence and abuse.

For students to be able to articulate how Gospel-based hope and healing relates to violence and abuse.

For students to know how individuals and the church can respond practically with help and victim advocacy.

For students to learn about the experiences of and responses to sexual and domestic violence.

REQUIRED READING

Books

Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault*, Crossway (288 pages)

Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Is It My Fault?: Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence*, Moody Publishing (240 pages)

Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovits, *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide or Churches and Ministries*, New Growth Press (320 pages)

RECOMMENDED READING

Recommended Books

Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *God Made All of Me: Helping Children Protect Their Bodies*

Justin S. Holcomb and Basyle Tchividjian, *Caring for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*, New Growth Press (15 pages)

Victor L. Vieth, *On This Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse on the Life and Words of Jesus*

Brad Hambrick, ed., *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*

Articles or Chapters

Herman Ridderbos, “The Structure of Paul’s Theology” *in Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Eerdmans, 1997) (provided electronically)

Justin S. Holcomb, “The Need for a Second Adam,” *Modern Reformation*, March/April 2017.

Justin S. Holcomb, “The Difference Between Shame and Guilt” *Modern Reformation*, March/April 2017.

Justin S. Holcomb, “The Ethics of Personhood,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, April 2013.

Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, “Does the Bible Say Women Should Suffer Abuse and Violence?” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 28:2 (2014): 9-21.

Justin S. Holcomb, “Violence in the Home: How Pastors Can Help Victims of Domestic Abuse,” *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2015.

Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, “After Domestic Violence, Why Should a Christian Wife Call the Police, Not a Pastor, First? To Stop the Abuse Cycle” *Christianity Today*, February 2015.

Lindsey A. Holcomb, “The Church and Women at Risk,” *ESV Women’s Study Bible*, pp. 1617-1619.

Victor L. Vieth, “Child Abuse and the Lutheran Confessional: A Call to Elevate Christ’s Teaching on Children above Church Traditions,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 46:3 (July 2019)

Victor I. Vieth, What Would Walther Do? Applying Law and Gospel to Victims and Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse,”*Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 2012, Vol. 40, No. 4, 257-273

Shira M. Berkovitz, “Institutional Abuse in the Jewish Community,” *Traditions* 50:2, 2017, pp. 11-49

Jouriles, E. N., Rancher, C., Mahoney, A., Kurth, C., Cook, K., & McDonald, R., “Divine Spiritual Struggles and Psychological Adjustment Among Adolescents Who Have Been Sexually Abused,” *Psychology of Violence*. December 19, 2019. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/vio0000274>

Vieth, Victor I. and Singer, Pete (2019) "Wounded Souls: The Need for Child Protection Professionals and Faith Leaders to Recognize and Respond to the Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse," *Mitchell Hamline Law Review*: Vol. 45: Issue 4, Article 6.

Victor I. Vieth, Mark D. Everson, Suzanna Tiapula, “Chaplains for Children: Twelve Potential Roles for a Theologian on the Multi-Disciplinary Team”

Amy Russell, “The Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse and Exploitation: What Research Tells Us,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45:3 (July 2018)

Lauren E. Maltby and Todd W. Hall, “Trauma, Attachment, and Spirituality: A Case Study,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 2012, Vol. 40, No. 4, 302-312

Jana Pressley and Joseph Spinazzola, “Beyond Survival: Application of a Complex Trauma Treatment Model in the Christian Context,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 2015, Vol. 43, No. 1, 8–22

*Currents in Theology and Mission* (45:3, July 2018): The articles for this issue follow the theme “Child Abuse and the Church: Prevention, Pastoral Care, and Healing”

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Write a 3,000-word paper focusing on domestic abuse, sexual assault, or child sexual abuse and how a particular biblical or theological theme (sin, image Dei, creation, doctrine of God, Christology, eschatology, etc.) relates to that particular violence and abuse. Due July 24, 2020 by 3pm ET.

GRADING SCALE

The paper grade will determine your final course grade.

A (97-100), A- (94-96), B+ (91-93), B (88-90), B- (86-87), C+ (83-85), C (80-82), C- (78-79), D+ (75- 77), D (72-74), D- (70-71), F (below 70)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Class attendance and participation are a central part of this course. If you should miss a class, you are expected to contact another student regarding the information covered.

Late papers will be graded down 33% for each 24 hours late.

All written assignments should be submitted in either Word or PDF format. Assignments should be double spaced with 1” margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman 12 point type. Assignments must be submitted electronically.

Do not submit a paper that you submitted for another course. This will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment.



**Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Abuse and the Church

Professor: Justin Holcomb

Campus: Orlando

Date: July 5-6, 2019

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| **MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**  *In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.*  *\*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.* | | **Rubric**   * Strong * Moderate * Minimal * None | **Mini-Justification** |
| **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 | Course requires application of theology to abuse and violence. |
| **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.) | Strong | Course requires understanding sin, violence, hope, and healing from scripture. |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Moderate | Course explores and applies Reformed theology broadly, but not the Westminster Standards specifically. |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Minimal | Course will influence how students honor God by caring for image bearers. |
| **Desire for Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | Strong | Course is focused on confirming church and church to Word of God regarding abuse. |
| **Winsomely Reformed** | 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.) | Strong | Course focuses on hope and healing from abuse to all. |
| **Preach** | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Minimal | Course will influence preaching and teaching, but is not focus |
| **Worship** | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | None |  |
| **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 | Course will focus on the need for wise, biblical shepherding |
| **Church/World** | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Strong | Course is focused on confirming church and church to Word of God regarding abuse. |