Course: **Paul’s Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon**

May-July 2022

Richard Lamb, MA

DESCRIPTION:  This course is designed to give a general introduction to the life and writing of the Apostle Paul as found in the letters to the churches in Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi, and the pastoral letter written to Philemon. We will read these texts with a view to understanding: comparing and contrasting the style, structure, and purpose of each of the these texts. Significantly, however, we will also be focused on mining these texts for direct applications to the preaching, teaching, training, discipleship and evangelistic strategies of leaders today. The course will model the use of scripture study as a source of insight into ministry, specifically in skills and character training and discipleship, and in ministry vision, equipping and empowerment.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:  The course seeks the following goals for each student: (1) *Cognitive:* theoretical knowledge relating to the Biblical texts, their purpose and structure, and each one’s unique contribution to the growth and development of the early church; (2) A*ffective:* deepened appreciation for the pastoral, theological and strategic concerns of Paul; (3) *Skills*: capacity to use Paul’s teaching in his letters to engage young disciples in their own development.

COURSE FORMAT: The course will meet for ten 2.5-hour sessions, with work prepared before and after the class time. Much of the discussion-based class time will be spent in inductive scripture study led by the instructor. Students will be asked to present Bible studies in class that address passages in the book of Philippians. Students will then shape and adapt one or more Pauline passages studied to present it in a church setting, in a sermon or a discussion-based Bible study teaching setting, during the term, with detailed self-evaluations of both learning experiences.

REQUIRED READING: 600 pp. of required reading.

1. Biblical Texts: Read each subject epistle in a single sitting. Then, read through each book a second time, this time making a list of as many distinct textual and exegetical questions you can think of, at least one key question per chapter of each gospel.
2. Watch the Bible Project overview of each Gospel as an introduction to the structure and themes of each. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/ephesians/>  etc
3. Selections
	* Lorenzo Bautista, Hidalgo B. Garcia, Sze-Kar Wan, The Asian Way of Thinking in Theology, Paper for a course *“Theological Issues in Asian Theology”* taught by W.A. Dyrness at the Asian Theological Seminary, Manila.
* Darrell L Bock, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. InterVarsity Press, 2019.
* M. Eugene Boring, “Philippians and Philemon: Date and Provenance”, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Volume 89, 2019.
* Ted Grimsrud, “Transforming the powers: the continuing relevance of Walter Wink,” Transformation, 23 January 2018. Found online at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/transforming-powers-continuing-relevance-of-walter-wink/>
* Craig S. Keener, “One New Temple in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22, Acts 21:27-29; Mark 11:17; John 4:20-24)”, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 2009, pp75-92.
* David Liu, “The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Church: A Study of Ephesians,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 2011, p74-92. Translated by Connie Au.
* James R. McConnell, “Colossians: Background and Contexts,” *Review and Expositor*. 2019, Vol. I 16(4) 397-410
* Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000. Pp 125-145.
* Mary Hinkle Shore, “The Freedom of Three Christians: Paul’s Letter to Philemon and the Beginning of a New Age.”
* Marianne Meye Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005. Pp1-109.
* <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/lostinaoneacrewood/2019/03/04/the-powers-that-be-walter-wink-and-the-angels-in-the-new-testament/>
* David Tiede, “The Execution of Hostility - Ephesians 2:11-22”, Sermon preached for the Lexington Seminar, Northeast Harbor, Maine on June 11, 2001.
* Murray Vasser, “Grant Slaves Equality: Re-examining the Translation of Colossians 4:1,”  *Tyndale Bulletin* 68.1 (2017)
* Various Exegetical notes from the teacher, distributed in class.

Most of the above texts can be downloaded from the dropbox folder: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/w8be20tmy6wzr3i/AADvy_5n416CxpO8xeL3PitQa?dl=0>

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT:

1. **Exegetical Questions** from your readings of the Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon. Follow the models presented in class for crafting good exegetical questions. This should include at least 2 exegetical questions per chapter, focusing on issues of real challenge, confusion or surprise for you. Three pages, 1000 words. (10%).
2. **Book Report: At least one commentary and one deep-dive article.** Students will write a five-page (1600 word) report on selected readings, including one of the commentary texts and at least one deep-dive article. Summarize the main points of each author briefly. Then, comment on what you found most helpful, what resonated with your context and what did not, areas of disagreement with the readings, etc. Share at least two critical insights you appreciate from this reading. (25%).
3. **Ministry In-Class Bible Study:** Students will prepare a short discussion-based study in Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi. We will leave the study of Philippians in the class to the student Bible studies. Each student will come with their chosen passage, a set of discussion questions, and be prepared to lead students in an inductive study of the passage, followed by a short summary and challenge for application to the students’ context. After the in-class discussion, the student will write up their study and submit 1) the passage, discussion questions, and preparatory notes, and 2) a brief evaluation of the discussion itself and the learning process, both for themselves as teachers and for others in their small group. (3 pages, 1000 words, 25%).
4. **Congregational or Organizational Use of a Pauline Prison Epistle Text in teaching, training, or preaching:** Students will prepare an in-depth study of a subject epistle text (or shorter related texts) for use in a congregational or organizational teaching or training setting. A four-page exegetical paper and a one page reflection and self evaluation will be submitted after the presentation. (30%) (1600 words)
5. Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory, as is enthusiastic participation in class discussions and exercises. Participation in class Whatsapp discussions will also count toward attendance grade. Grade will be reduced for unexcused absences or persistent lateness. (10%)

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES:

* Exegetical Questions on the epistle readings due the fifth day of class, May 28, 2022.
* Bible Study In-Class Discussion due the seventh day of class for use in class, June 13, 2022.
* Remaining assignments due the last week of term.

**Course Schedule:**

* **Mondays 8:00PM-10:30PM:** May 9, 16, 23, 30; June 13, 20, 27; July 4**.**
* **Also Saturdays 10:00AM-12:30PM: May 21, 28.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Passages Studied** | **Topics** |
| 1May 9 | Colossians 1-2 | Course Intro, Paul’s Life and Context; The Hymn of Christ |
| 2May 16 | Colossians 3-4 | Colossians context, heresies |
| 3May 21 | Ephesians 1-2:11 | Ephesians context, Paul’s themes in Ephesians |
| 4May 23 | Ephesians 2:11-3 | Reconciliation and the “Mystery”, Paul’s great ministry |
| 5May 28 | Ephesians 4-6 | Implications of Paul’s Cosmic Vision, Gifts to the Church, Put off and Put On |
| 6May 30 | Philemon | Slavery and Discipleship |
| 7June 13 | Philippians 1-2 | Student Philippians Bible Studies |
| 8June 20 | Philippians 3-4 | Student Philippians Bible Studies |
| 9June 27 | Philippians and Summary | Teaching Paul Inductively |
| 10July 4 | Final Session | Paul’s key themes for today |
| August 1 | **Final Due Date** | All Assignments due. |