

**EXPLORING CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
SYLLABUS
VIRGINIA DISTRICT TRAINING CENTER**

Course Dates: September 12-October 24

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Rationale

The Modular Course of Study Series Foreword is a rationale for Exploring Christian Ministry. The module writer intends to view the minister and the ministry from a biblical perspective, to present the ministry as a high calling demanding holy living and hard work, and to encourage a hunger for and commitment to a lifetime of arduous study and patient ministry.

This module is designed for those persons who have received a call from God to full-time Christian ministry and for those who wish to explore the foundation and scope of the Christian ministry. During the module, learners will have the opportunity to examine the scriptures that provide a foundation for Christian ministry and the key components of ministry. The module content can be summarized as answers to three questions: What should the minister BE?, What should the minister KNOW?, and What should the minister be able to DO?

Learning is best accomplished in a collaborative and cooperative environment. A variety of learning activities are incorporated in this module including listening to lectures, completing homework assignments, and participating in discussion groups. Each learner is a valuable teaching-learning resource and will bear responsibility for the quality of the learning environment by preparing homework assignments and participating in class discussions.

This module is an introduction, a survey of the Christian ministry. As such, the module presents a variety of subjects but none comprehensively. Many topics that are introduced have been expanded into full modules and will be experienced by the learner at a later time. The learner should not expect complete answers to all questions during this module but should become aware of the range of issues and topics that encompass the Christian Ministry.

Educational Assumptions

1. The work of the Holy Spirit of Christ is essential to any process of Christian education at any level. We will consistently request and expect the Spirit's presence within and among us.
2. Christian teaching and learning is best done in the context of community (people being and working together). Community is the gift of the Spirit but may be enhanced or hindered by human effort. Communities have common values, stories, practices,

and goals. Explicit effort will be invested to enhance community within the class. Group work will take place in every lesson.

3. Every adult student has knowledge and experiences to contribute to the class. We learn not only from the learning leader and the reading assignments, but also from each other. Each student is valued not only as a learner but also as a teacher. That is one reason that so many exercises in this course are cooperative and collaborative in nature.
4. Journaling is an ideal way to bring theory and practice together as students synthesize the principles and content of the lessons with their own experiences, preferences, and ideas.

Outcome Statements

This module contributes to the development of the following abilities as defined in the U.S. Sourcebook for Ministerial Development.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- CN19 Ability to identify and explain the main characteristics of the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Human Person, Sin, Salvation, The Christian Life, the Church and Sacraments, and Eschatology.
- CN20 Ability to reflect theologically on life and ministry
- CP1 Ability to communicate publicly through oral and written mediums with clarity and creativity for the sake of fostering meaning
- CP4 Ability to write an integrative philosophy of ministry that will answer “why I do what I do when I do it?”
- CP12 Ability to appropriately express pastoral care and concern for individuals and families in crises, passages, and the normal routines of life
- CP13 Ability to offer spiritual counsel and to discern for referral counseling needs beyond the minister’s ability
- CP14 Ability to apply the knowledge of basic helping skills gained from historic Christian and appropriate contemporary models
- CP21 Ability to envision, order and participate in contextualized theologically grounded worship and to develop and lead appropriate services for special occasions (i.e. wedding, funeral, baptism, and Lord’s Supper)

Personal Growth

The development of a portfolio for assessing personal growth in character. This portfolio would include periodic self-assessment and assessment by significant others. These assessments would evaluate the minister with the “BE” categories.

- CH5 Ability to apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity, specifically as they relate to ministers and laity for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness
- CH9 Ability to apply understanding of his or her ongoing developmental needs across the life course of the minister to the pursuit of holy character
- CH10 Ability to demonstrate a realistic self-understanding including personal strengths, gifts, weaknesses, and areas of needed growth

- CH11 Ability to maintain the practice of Sabbath and healthy self-care
CH12 Ability to practice faithful stewardship of personal relations including gender relationships, marriage and family, personal finance, and professional conduct
CH14 Ability to maintain a healthy balance between family, church, and community commitments
CX2 Ability to analyze and describe congregations and communities

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To survey in basic and brief discussions

- the meaning and ground of Christian ministry
- the knowledge and skills needed for Christian ministry
- the common settings and functions of Christian ministry
- the character and behavior appropriate to Christian ministry

Course Strategies

To pursue the course objectives by

- creating a relaxed and congenial study atmosphere
- extracting course content from the teachings of Scripture
- augmenting and illustrating material with shared experiences
- questioning freely and answering candidly with mutual respect
- relating our learning to our present and anticipated ministry to others

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance, attention, and participation are especially important. Students are responsible for all assignments and in-class work. Much of the work in this course is Small Group work. Cooperative, small group work cannot be made up. That makes attendance imperative. Even if one does extra reading or writing the values of discussion, dialog, and learning from each other are thwarted. Because of its foundational nature and short length, no lessons of this module may be missed. If one lesson is missed the student will be required to repeat the whole module at a later date.
2. Small Group Work. Nothing is more important in this course than the small group work. The class members may be assigned to groups of three. The group members will serve as study partners for many group explorations and discussion throughout the module. Each member is responsible to listen to others respectfully and patiently, share in discussions freely and disagree agreeably, and complete assigned work responsibly and cheerfully.
3. Assignments

Journaling: The only “term assignment” is your journal. It is to be used regularly, if not daily. On two occasions during the term, the journals will be checked by the

instructor. Each week the homework assignment includes “Journal Prompts,” which start you on interpretation and application of the themes of the lesson.

The journal should become the student’s friend and treasury of insights, devotions, and ideas. Here the integration of theory and practice occurs. The spiritual life nature of the journal helps guard against the course of study being merely academic as you are repeatedly called upon to apply the principles studied to your own heart and your own ministry situation.

This journal is not a diary, not a catchall. It is, rather, a guided journal or a focused journal in which the educational experience and its implications are selected for reflection and writing.

The framers of this curriculum are concerned about the way that students fall into learning “about” the Bible, or “about” the spiritual life rather than learning—that is coming to know and internalize the Bible and spiritual principles. The journaling experience ensures that the “Be” component of “Be, Know, and Do” is present in the course of study. Be faithful with all journaling assignments.

Daily Work: This course has regular homework assignments. It is called daily work because even though the class may meet once a week the student should be working on the course on a "daily" basis. Sometimes the homework assignments are quite heavy. The assignments are important. Even if homework is not discussed in class every session, the work is to be handed in. This gives the instructor regular information about the student's progress in the course. That is much to be preferred to waiting until a final exam or a term paper reveals only at the end of the course that a student is having difficulty.

The normal time for homework to be handed in is at the beginning of each class session. All homework is required and is due on time. Late work is not acceptable.

Course Outline and Schedule

The class will meet for 18-20 hours according to the following schedule:

(Please contact the Instructor for class times)

Session Date	
September 12	1. The Ground of Christian Ministry: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Incarnate Word• The Written Word• The Preached Word
September 19	2. The Persons Involved in Christian Ministry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Lord Who Speaks the Word• The Minister Who has Heard the Word• The Person who Hears the Word Through the Minister

October 3	<p>3. The Knowledge Required for Christian Ministry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing Your God • Knowing Your Self • Knowing Your People
October 10	<p>4. The Communication Skills Needed for Christian Ministry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to Listen • Learning to Speak • Learning to Persuade
October 17	<p>5. The Common Venues of Christian Ministry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister as Worshiper • The Minister as Counselor • The Minister as Administrator
October 24	<p>6. The Christian Ministry as Servanthood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Servant Life • Sustaining the Servant Life • Persevering in the Servant Life • The Lord's Supper

Course Evaluation

The instructor, the course itself, and the student's progress will be evaluated. These evaluations will be made in several ways.

The progress of students will be evaluated with an eye for enhancing the learning experience by:

1. Carefully observing the small group work, critiquing the competence of reports, the balance of discussion, the quality of the relationships, the cooperation level, and the achievement of assigned tasks.
2. Noting in-class participation.
3. Careful reading of homework assignments.
4. Journal checks

The evaluation of the course materials and the instructor will be evaluated by: frequently asking and discussing the effectiveness and relevance of a certain method, experience, story, lecture, or other activity.

Some evaluation cannot be made during the class itself. Some objectives will not be measurable for years to come. If students incorporate the best of this course into their own ministries the fruit of this educational endeavor could go on for a long time. In truth, that is what we expect.

Additional Information

A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

Instructor's Availability

Good faith efforts to serve the students both in and beyond the classroom will be made.

Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration

Participating in the course of study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each course you will be required to listen to lectures, read several books, participate in discussions, write papers, and take exams. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The course work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritually formative work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head to your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work to faithfully spend time daily in your journal. Many people confess that this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling as time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, an ah-ha that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet, family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with course material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems that we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, and aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your course work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration, weaving together faith development with learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!