



THE SACREDNESS OF SCRIPTURE:

*The Story of the Bible and the Skill of Interpreting
for Witness, Worship, and Wisdom.*

SYLLABUS WINTER 2027

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THEO 102 - 2 CREDIT HOURS

Hybrid: both in person and online

MISSION OF COVENANT SCHOOL OF MINISTRY

Covenant School of Ministry exists to form disciples in the way of Jesus by shaping the heart through ancient spiritual practices, renewing the mind through rigorous theological study, and equipping the hands through apprenticeship for the work of the Kingdom and the renewal of all creation.

COURSE SCHEDULE

We meet on the following Mondays from 6:00pm-9:00pm: January 11, 25; February 8, 22; March 8, 22; April 5, 12 (28 contact hours). January 11 and April 12 will be immersive and integrative worship learning experiences.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course forms disciples through a deeper understanding of Sacred Scripture as faithful witness to God, worship of God, and wisdom for life in God. At the heart of the course is a path of learning ordered toward knowing the God who loves us. Scripture is engaged not merely as information to analyze, but as revelation to receive. Students learn to listen

with reverent hearts, interpret with discerning minds, and allow the Word to form them into people of witness, wisdom, and worship. The goal is not merely to know about God, but to know and love God more deeply.

To that end, this course equips students to approach Scripture with humility, devotion, and discernment. Together we will explore:

- **Canonology** – how the Bible came to be
- **Bibliology** – the nature and purpose of Scripture
- **Hermeneutics** – how to interpret Scripture faithfully across its many genres
- **Tradition** – how ancient Jewish and early Christian voices continue to shape our understanding of Scripture.
- **Practical Theology** – how to use Scripture to serve those we are called to love.

Our hope is that this course will educate and equip disciples to discern the witness of the Scriptures that reveals God, to listen to Scripture as an act of worship, and to respond to its divine wisdom with lives that are transformed.

Rooted in the conviction that the Word is both ancient and alive, students are invited not merely to understand Scripture—but to be changed by it.

(Matthew 7:24-27; Romans 12:1-2)

LEARNING OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this course, students are expected to:

1. **Articulate** the historical reliability and theological significance of the Bible. *(head)*
2. **Explain** the purpose, scope, and unifying witness of Sacred Scripture. *(head)*
3. **Demonstrate** reverence for the unique role of Scripture in the history of God's people. *(heart)*
4. **Practice** humility in engaging diverse interpretive traditions, including early Jewish interpreters, the Church Fathers, and contemporary voices. *(heart)*
5. **Recognize** Scripture as revelation meant for transformation as well as understanding. *(heart/head)*
6. **Interpret** texts from at least five biblical genres using sound hermeneutical methods. *(hands)*
7. **Apply** Scripture faithfully and pastorally in response to human need and ministry contexts. *(hands)*

REQUIRED MATERIALS

The English Standard Version (ESV) Bible

Please ensure you have a physical copy or a digital version of the ESV Bible for course readings and assignments.

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas K. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding Scripture*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014. (300 pages)

Peterson, Eugene H. *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006. (200 pages)

RECOMMEND MATERIALS

1. **Wright, N. T. *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*. Rev. and expanded ed. New York: HarperOne, 2011.**

A clear and accessible introduction to the authority of Scripture in the life of the Church. Wright argues that biblical authority is best understood as the authority of God exercised through Scripture, read within the larger narrative of God's redemptive work in the world.

2. **Boyd, Gregory A. *Inspired Imperfection: How the Bible's Problems Enhance Its Divine Authority*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020.**

A constructive and provocative treatment of biblical inspiration that wrestles honestly with tensions, difficulties, and human features in Scripture. Boyd argues that Scripture's divine authority is not weakened by these features but disclosed through them, much like the mystery of incarnation.

3. **Cahill, Thomas. *The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels*. New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1998.**

A lively historical and interpretive account of the distinctive contribution of Israel to the moral, historical, and spiritual imagination of the West. Cahill helps students see the Bible's world-shaping vision and the unique legacy of the Jewish Scriptures in human history.

4. **Bruce, F. F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988.**

A classic study of how the biblical canon came to be recognized and received by the people of God. Bruce provides a careful historical overview of the formation of the Old and New Testament canon and remains a foundational guide for canon studies.

5. **Schneiders, Sandra M. *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*. 2nd ed. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016.**

A major work on reading the New Testament not merely as historical literature but as sacred Scripture. Schneiders offers a deeply theological and hermeneutical approach that highlights revelation, transformation, and the role of the reader within the community of faith.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Reading (15 hours) = 150 points

Students are required to read *Eat this Book* and *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*. *Eat This Book* engages with course objective #5 and *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth* engages with course objective #6. Student will also select one additional book from recommended materials.

Additional reading assignments will be given via pdfs throughout the course.

Students are required to read at a Familiarity Level (see description below) unless otherwise mentioned.

According to accreditation seminary standards there are two levels

- **Familiarity level.** This level assumes knowledge of the material assigned and leads to accountability in class. (45 pages per hour).
- **Mastery level.** Reading at this level will average about 20 pages per hour and assumes careful reflective interaction with the ideas, note taking, and will lead to accountability in class, and papers at a mastery level (1000 pages = 50 hours).

These are intended to serve as flexible guidelines or rules of thumb; they are not thought to be rigid. It is certainly understood that books are printed with varying numbers of words per page and written to varying reading levels.

Each reading assignment should be completed before the class session that it is due on (see course schedule below for due dates) so that you will be able to participate in and benefit from the class discussions. *Due date: As assigned in the course schedule.*

2. Biblical Theology of Interpreting Scripture (15 hours) = 150 points

Students will submit an 8-page theology paper focused on: how the children of Israel used Scripture, what the purpose of Scripture was to the children of Israel and how this differed from contemporary religious culture, and how the early church understood Scripture and its purposes and how that differed from the Hebrew Scriptures.

This assignment will test the student's ability to articulate a theology of/strategy for Holy Scripture (course objective #1, #2 and #3). *Due date:*

3. Lectio Divina Journal = 150 points (15 hours)

Lectio Divina journal. The student will do *lectio divina* with the following Scripture texts, working his/her way through the various genres of Scripture each week:

WEEK

1. Genesis 1 (Sacred Origin Narrative)
2. Genesis 32:22-32 (Torah Narrative)
3. Exodus 20:8-11 (Law)
4. Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (Updated and Revised Law)
5. 1 Kings 19:1-18 (Historical Narrative)
6. Psalm 1 (Poetry)
7. Proverbs 3:5-6 (Wisdom Literature)
8. Isaiah 40:1-5 (Prophetic Oracle)
9. Daniel 7:13-18 (Apocalyptic Literature)
10. Mark 10:46-52 (Gospel Narrative)
11. Acts 5:12-16 (Apologetic Narrative)
12. Romans 12:1-4 (Epistolary)
13. Philippians 2:5-11 (Hymnal)
14. Revelation 10:8-11 (Apocalyptic Literature)

Post a devotional using the 4 movements of *Lectio Divina* from one of your texts above to social-media, a lectio-gram, lectio-tok, lectio-book practicing the four movements of *lectio divina* and integrating a fifth movement (actio). (course objective #5, #6 and #7) **Due date:**

4. “Ministry of the Word” Apprenticeship. (10 hours) = 100 points

Students will apprentice with an approved ministry leader in a setting where Scripture is used for pastoral care, counseling, coaching, devotional teaching, prayer ministry, or spiritual direction. Students will observe how the mentor listens, interprets, applies, and ministers Scripture in a real-life ministry context. They will then prepare and participate in one brief “ministry of the Word” moment, such as leading a devotional, praying Scripture over someone, offering biblical encouragement, or guiding a Scripture-based reflection.

Students will submit a 2–3 page reflection describing what they observed, how Scripture was used, what they learned about handling the Word faithfully and pastorally, and how the experience shaped their understanding of Scripture as a means of wisdom, care, formation, and spiritual direction.

This assignment will test the student’s ability to interpret Scripture faithfully, apply Scripture pastorally, and minister the Word with humility, wisdom, and love. **Due date:**

5. Final Course Evaluation (15 min.) = 25 points

Before the end of the last Friday of the semester, you will receive an email with a link to the final course evaluation.

6. Class Attendance & Participation = 50 points (28 hours)

Class sessions will be a combination of lecture, question/answer, and small group discussions from the reading.

AI Usage for this Course

In this course, AI tools (such as ChatGPT) may be used to support research—helping you locate resources, summarize material, or develop study questions—provided that any substantive AI contribution is cited (e.g., “Generated by ChatGPT, OpenAI, March 10, 2025”). Students whose primary language is not English may also use AI translation tools to aid in writing reflection papers, noting this use at the end of the paper. *AI may not be used to produce original theological analysis or spiritual reflections in place of your own work, nor to fabricate sources.* All AI-assisted content must be verified for accuracy and integrated thoughtfully into your own prayerful study and engagement with scripture.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

1. Receptive Worship
 - a. Experiencing Scripture as Immersive Worship (singing, copying, listening)
 - b. Receiving Communion Together
2. Syllabus Overview

WEEK 2

The Story Behind the Scriptures

Canon, Catastrophe, and Calling

3. **The Text as Truth.** (A) Why Scripture? (B) Why These Texts? (C) Scripture’s purpose for Israel (covenant, worship, wisdom). (D) Scripture’s function in the Church (witness, worship, wisdom, a kingdom-worldview)
4. **The Text in Travail:** catastrophe as the genesis of the Scripture.
5. **The Text in Tradition:** the role of oral tradition, scribes, councils, and preservers of the Book.

WEEK 3

6. **How Christians Got Our Bible:** Overview of canon formation: TANAK (Hebrew Canon) and Hebrew Canon Criterion, New Testament Canon and Canon criteria: apostolicity, orthodoxy, catholicity, usage

How to Read the Bible Faithfully

Hermeneutics, Genre, and the Heart of Interpretation

7. **Rightly Dividing the Word: Witness, Worship, and Wisdom.** (A) Eisegesis vs. exegesis: 5 Wrong questions and 5 right questions to ask of the Scriptures. (B) Interpreting Scriptures through the historical-literary background, and (C) socio-rhetorical backdrops of a text.
8. **The Bible as Sacred Story (Witness):** Narrative theology and literary structure. Mimetic Theory and Anti-Myth (Rene Girard): how Scripture subverts myth.

WEEK 4

9. **The Bible as Sacrament (Worship).** (A) What is Sacrament? (B) How Scripture Functions as Sacrament? (C) Praying the Psalms. (D) Lectio Divina: Praying All Other Scriptures. (E) Listening to Scripture In Community As Worship.
10. **Scripture as an Incarnating Word (Wisdom).** (A) What is Hokhmah. (B) Jesus: Logos (*Hokhmah*) in Flesh. (C) Landscape of Biblical Wisdom. (D) Rhetorical Effect of Wisdom Literature. (E) Rules for Interpreting Wisdom. (F) Pitfalls to Avoid. (G) Job: the Wisdom of Suffering and Mystery. (H) James as New Testament Wisdom.
11. **Genre Awareness:** Reading wisely across biblical forms: Myth, History, Poetry, Prophecy, Gospel, Epistle, Apocalypse.

WEEK 5

Practicing Interpretation

Tools, Traditions, and Transforming the Reader

12. **The Tools of Interpretation:** English translations—which one and for what purpose? Utilizing tools—concordance, commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible software. Online applications BibleGateway, YouVersion, Biblehub (interlinear), Logos and Artificial Intelligence.
13. **Seven Rules for Reading Scripture + Bonus Rabbi Rules:** (A) Let Love Rule; (B) How Interpret Through the Holy Spirit; (C) First Mention Principle; (D) 2–3 Witness Rule; (E) Context-Context-Context; (F) Scripture Interpreting Scripture; (G) Progressive Revelation; (H) PARDES.

WEEK 6

14. **Developing a Hermeneutic for Ministry:** how to use Scripture to minister to others in the spirit of "we will give ourselves to prayer and ministry of the word."

15. Integrative Project Instruction and Guide: interpret a passage in light of wisdom, witness, and worship for the purposes of ministering to someone.

WEEK 7

16. Interpreting difficult texts (Hebrew Scriptures of violence, gender and patriarchalism, suffering and theodicy)

WEEK 8

17. Reflective Worship
 - a. Singing the Psalms.
 - b. Sharing What God is doing within us.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:

Lectures:

Lectures will provide structured instruction in the key themes, concepts, and frameworks of the course. Through biblical, theological, historical, and practical teaching, lectures are intended to deepen student understanding, clarify core ideas, and equip students to engage course material with greater depth, precision, and wisdom. Students are expected to listen actively, take notes, and come prepared to interact thoughtfully with the material presented in class.

Receptive and Reflective Worship Practices:

Each course will include worship-based practices designed to support the spiritual formation of the student. The opening portion of the course will emphasize receptive worship practices that help students slow down, attend to God, and consecrate their learning through prayer, Scripture, silence, song, and communal attentiveness. The closing portion of the course will emphasize reflective worship practices that invite students to prayerfully process what they are learning, discern God's activity in their lives, and respond through worship, reflection, and embodied surrender. These practices are an essential part of the course and are intended to cultivate not only theological understanding but also spiritual attentiveness and transformation.

Discussions:

Class discussions will provide students with opportunities to engage course material in a collaborative and thoughtful learning environment. Through guided conversation, students will be encouraged to ask questions, test ideas, listen carefully to others, and articulate their own insights with clarity and charity. Discussion is intended to strengthen critical thinking, deepen comprehension, and foster a shared learning community in which

theological reflection, spiritual discernment, and practical application are explored together.

Assignments:

Assignments will be designed to assess understanding, critical analysis, and synthesis of course material. These may include written essays, reflective journals, and other forms of assessment. Clear instructions and expectations will be provided for each assignment. It is the responsibility of the student to adhere to deadlines and submit assignments in the specified format and manner outlined by the instructor. Feedback on assignments will be provided promptly to support student learning and progress throughout the course. Assignments are due Saturdays at 11:59pm each week.

Apprenticeship / Applied Practice:

Courses may include apprenticeship-based learning experiences designed to help students translate course content into lived practice. These may involve ministry exercises, guided practices, leadership opportunities, observation, mentoring, case studies, or contextual application assignments. The purpose of this component is to cultivate practical wisdom, ministry competence, and embodied faithfulness so that students not only understand what they are learning, but also begin to practice it in real-life settings.

Policies and Procedures

We prioritize academic excellence and responsibility in the completion of coursework. We understand that students may encounter unexpected challenges that could impede their ability to submit assignments on time. This policy aims to establish clear guidelines and procedures regarding late work submission for students enrolled in our courses.

Submission Deadlines: All assignment deadlines are clearly stated on the calendar at the end of this syllabus. Students are responsible for adhering to the specified deadlines for each assignment and participating in scheduled course activities.

Late Work Policy: Assignments are expected to be submitted by the specified deadlines. Late submissions will incur a penalty of 10% deducted from the total grade for each day past the due date, up to a maximum of 5 days. After 5 days, late submissions may not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the School of Ministry Administrator due to extenuating circumstances. The student is responsible for communicating any challenges or issues that may impact their ability to submit work on time. Extensions may be granted at the instructor's discretion based on the circumstances.

Attendance Policy:

Academic Honesty Members are expected to be responsible and honest in academic matters. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will result in disciplinary action.