



Birmingham Theological Seminary
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PS1950 Church Vitality (Lampstand Conference) Syllabus

Semester: 2025 Spring

Professor: Mr. Ike Reeder

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Course: PS1950 Church Vitality (Lampstand Conference)

Room: Briarwood Fellowship Hall

Credits: 2

Dates:

- **Conference:** January 22-24, 2025
- **VC Follow-up 1:** Saturday, February 28, 2025 (9:00 AM - 11:00 AM)
- **VC Follow-up 2:** Saturday, March 28, 2025 (9:00 AM - 11:00 AM)

Course Close Date: April 17, 2025

Course Description

The Lampstand Conference is focused on promoting principles of Church Vitality and Revitalization. The conference covers topics such as: What is the Mission of the Church? What are the marks of a healthy church? What is a biblical theology of the church? The conference then splits into three tracks: Church Revitalization, Church Planting, and Next Level Leadership. Students will gain an understanding of the Biblical doctrine of the church and its Biblical leadership standards, as well as examining the ongoing process of church revitalization. Graduate students are required to attend the Church Revitalization track, unless granted special permission from the professor.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- **Content:** To understand the biblical church profile and the pressing need of church revitalization, church planting, and pastoral leadership in North America, along with the related issues.
- **Content:** To acquaint the student with specific quality literature that deals with the issues of church renewal and revitalization, planting, and leadership.



- **Competency:** To develop a clear understanding of the implementation of the biblical principles of the church as applied to contemporary and contextual situations.
- **Competency:** To determine Biblical models and theological principles applicable to church vitality.
- **Competency:** To develop a plan for revitalizing a church that has lost its initial vitality (either a known church or an acquaintance church).
- **Character:** To identify those factors that bring church stagnation and decline, areas of church planting, and godly leadership.

Course Texts

The following five books are required for this course and will serve as the basis for the Reading & Conference Report and the capstone project. (Approx. 800+ pages of reading).

Required Texts:

- Davis, Andrew M. *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017.
- Lencioni, Patrick. *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive*. Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2014.
- Reeder, Harry. *Embers to a Flame* (2nd ed.). Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008.
- Reeder, Harry. *3D Leadership*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2018.

Collateral Texts:

For students interested in further research, the following titles are also recommended:

- Bridges, Jerry. *Disciplines of Grace*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2018.
- Dever, Mark. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- Ryken, Philip. *City on a Hill: Reclaiming the Biblical Pattern for the Church*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. *Spiritual Leadership*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2017.
- Tripp, Paul. *Dangerous Calling*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

A Note on Required and Recommended Texts

Please note that the inclusion of any text in this syllabus (whether as **required**, **collateral**, or **recommended** reading) does not imply a full theological endorsement of all its contents by the professor or by Birmingham Theological Seminary.

Graduate-level study requires a robust and critical engagement with diverse viewpoints. Some texts are assigned precisely because it is important for students to understand their content and arguments firsthand, even if we disagree with certain positions the author takes.



Course Requirements & Assessments

Course assignments are consolidated into a single, scaffolded capstone project: **The Church Revitalization Case Study**. This project is divided into two parts, supplemented by an initial reading report.

The two video conference follow-up sessions (**Feb 28** and **March 28**) will serve as mandatory workshops to develop Parts A and B of this project, respectively.

1. Reading & Conference Report (15% of final grade)

- **Description:** After completing the required readings (approx. 800 pages) and attending the Lampstand Conference, you will write a 5-7 page foundational report. This paper will synthesize the 3-4 most critical principles for church vitality drawn from the readings and conference sessions. You must explain how these principles will form the theological and theoretical basis for your case study.
- **Purpose:** This assignment assesses your comprehension of the core course content (Objectives 2, 4).
- **Due Date:** February 27, 2025 (before first VC workshop)

2. Revitalization Case Study: Part A - Diagnosis (35% of final grade)

- **Description:** You will select a church you are familiar with and write a 10-12 page diagnostic assessment. This single, integrated paper includes:
 - **Historical & Health Analysis:** A 10-15 year history identifying factors contributing to the church's current condition, including an assessment of its health indicators.
 - **Leadership & Field Research:** A leadership assessment of the church, supported by synthesized data from your interviews with at least two church leaders (e.g., vocational or lay leaders). The interview content should be used as evidence for your diagnosis, not submitted as separate reports.
- **Purpose:** This paper assesses your ability to identify factors of church stagnation and decline (Objective 5) and builds the factual foundation for your revitalization plan. The first VC session (Feb 28) will be a workshop for this assignment.
- **Due Date:** March 27, 2025 (before second VC workshop)

3. Revitalization Case Study: Part B - Prospectus & Plan (50% of final grade)

- **Description:** This 10-12 page capstone paper is your complete plan for revitalization, building directly on the diagnosis from Part A. It must contain the following elements:
 - **Section 1: Foundational Vision:** The proposed Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Affirmed Values for the church.
 - **Section 2: Ministry Strategy:** A detailed, 3-page explanatory document outlining the proposed ministry strategy to move the church toward vitality.
 - **Section 3: Theological Integration & Summation:** A final summation that uses



content from *Embers to a Flame*, *3D Leadership*, the Lampstand Conference, and other course readings to theologically justify and support your proposed plan.

- **Purpose:** This final project directly assesses the primary course competency: your ability to develop a comprehensive, theologically-grounded plan for revitalizing a church (Objectives 1, 3, 6). The second VC session (March 28) will be a workshop for this assignment.
- **Due Date:** April 18, 2025 (Course Close Date)

Grading Weight:

Assignment	Percentage
Reading & Conference Report	15%
Revitalization Case Study: Part A (Diagnosis)	35%
Revitalization Case Study: Part B (Prospectus)	50%
Total	100%

Course Schedule

Date	Topic / Assignment Due
Jan 22-24, 2025	Lampstand Conference (Schedule will be emailed to students)
Feb 27, 2025	Reading & Conference Report DUE (by 11:59 PM)
Feb 28, 2025 (9-11 AM)	VC Workshop 1: Diagnosis & Assessment (Case Study Part A)
Mar 27, 2025	Revitalization Case Study: Part A DUE (by 11:59 PM)
Mar 28, 2025 (9-11 AM)	VC Workshop 2: Prospectus & Planning (Case Study Part B)
Apr 18, 2025	Revitalization Case Study: Part B DUE (Course Close Date)



Course & Seminary Policies

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards:

All research papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian standards, including the title page. All papers are to be #12 font Times New Roman and Double-Spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Turabian Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments. The BTS Turabian Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Writing Center webpage: <https://www.btswritingcenter.net/>

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy:

In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new Generative AI policy. Unless the instructor clearly directs otherwise, students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and a violation of academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could result in further sanctions administered by the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS. More information on the Generative AI policy is available in the Student Handbook.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to be punctual and to attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor and/or the seminary office prior to the absence. Since this is an extended intensive, it is imperative that the students attend all sessions. Students may miss one session with a professor's excuse, but missing two sessions will result in a loss of a letter grade.

Class Policies and Procedures:

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note-taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a -3 point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed tests/exams may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in



advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.

Video Conference Policies and Procedures:

- Please utilize the BTS "Best VC (Video Conference) Practices" information for the course.
- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course. Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.
- In a Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of a dark screen will result in follow-up and may lead to removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.

BTS General Gading Rubric

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Multiple errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation per page	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing, and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for the assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly support the main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate, but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for the main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, overused, underused, or cited in error
The paper completely conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	The paper generally conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	The paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	The paper does not conform to Turabian's Manual for Writers



Selected Bibliography

This list provides resources for further research on church vitality, pastoral leadership, and ecclesiology.

- Adams, Jay. *Preaching with Purpose*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- Allen, Jason K., ed. *Portraits of a Pastor: The 9 Essential Roles of a Church Leader*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017.
- Anyabwile, Thabiti. *The Gospel and Church Revitalization*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- Baxter, Richard. *The Reformed Pastor*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021.
- Bridges, Jerry. *Growing Your Faith: How to Mature in Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014.
- Brite, Derrick, ed. *A Pastor's Heart: Essays in Memory of Harry Reeder*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2024.
- Chappell, Bryan. *Holiness by Grace*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.
- Clowney, Edmund P. *The Church*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1995.
- Coleman, Robert. *Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010.
- Dawn, Marva. *A Royal Waste of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- DeYoung, Kevin and Greg Gilbert. *What is the Mission of the Church?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Dockery, David S. *Theology, Church, and Ministry: A Handbook for Theological Education*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017.
- Geiger, Eric, and Kevin Peck. *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development*. Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2016.
- Greenway, Roger, ed. *The Pastor Evangelist*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1951.
- Jones, D. Martin Lloyd. *Preachers and Preaching*. Kevin DeYoung, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Jones, D. Martin Lloyd. *Revival*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1987.
- Keller, Timothy. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Leeman, Jonathan. *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- MacNair, Donald. *The Living Church: A Guide for Revitalization*. Suwanee, GA: Great Commission Publications, 1980.
- MacArthur, John. *The Master's Plan for the Church*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008.
- McIntosh, Gary L. *Biblical Church Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003.
- Miller, John C. *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986.
- Miller, Paul E. *A Praying Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009.
- Mohler, R. Albert Jr. *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2012.



- Murray, John. *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied*. Carl Trueman, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015.
- Parish, Archie. *The Spirit of Revival: Discovering the Wisdom of Jonathan Edwards*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Piper, John. *Brothers, We are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013.
- Piper, John. *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Piper, John. *Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Revised and Expanded Edition). Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021.
- Rainer, Thom. *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.
- Stetzer, Ed. *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Grew*. Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2007.
- Stott, John. *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's Guide to Making Disciples Through Scripture and Doctrine*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019.
- Whitney, Donald. *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014.
- Wilson, Jared C. *The Gospel-Driven Church: Uniting Church-Growth Techniques with the Process of the Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.



BTS Outcomes Evaluation

Please rank each outcome on a scale of 1-5

- **1:** this outcome is not covered in this class
- **2:** this outcome is only touched on in this class
- **3:** this outcome is discussed in conjunction with class material
- **4:** this outcome lightly assessed as part of course assessment (one assignment)
- **5:** this outcome is fully integrated into the assessment (multiple assignments) and instruction of this course

Outcome	Rank	Rational (one sentence)
Scripture: Students will articulate the truth of Scripture and Scripture as truth effectively, developing a love for the whole counsel of God as the Word of God.	5	The entire case study is built on applying Scriptural principles of ecclesiology to a real-world church.
Reformed Theology: Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology relative to the Five Solas.	4	Students must theologically justify their revitalization plan using course readings and conference principles rooted in Reformed thought.
Local Church: Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church	5	The course is entirely built around a scaffolded, applied ministry project focused on a local church.
Wisdom: Students will grow in character; increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.	3	The course discusses leadership and health, which relate to wisdom, but it's not a primary assessment focus.
Discipleship: Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship—both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).	3	Vitality principles are discussed in conjunction with discipleship, but specific discipleship plans are not a core assessed component.
Communication: Students will grow in the efficacy of their communication	4	The course heavily assesses written communication through three



(articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching—respective to various departments) both in content knowledge and rhetorical strategies.		distinct, formal papers (report, diagnosis, and prospectus).
Worldview: Students will demonstrate a growing ability to apply God’s word to all spheres of life, evidenced through class discussion and other assigned assessments.	4	The case study requires students to apply a biblical worldview to the specific spheres of church leadership, health, and strategy.
Leadership: Students will grow in their understanding of godly leadership and ability to lead others in the service of the local church.	5	Leadership is a core theme, with students assessing existing leadership and creating leadership documents (mission, vision, strategy).