

# CURRICULAR PRIORITIES

## Historical/Grammatical Exegesis

The Master of Divinity degree is the historical standard in academic preparation for both vocational ministry and advanced theological study. The program develops essential biblical competencies in leaders who must be skilled in interpreting Scripture. Because of this, CTS requires exegesis courses in both Hebrew and Greek, in addition to two semesters of basic instruction in each language. There are at least four reasons for this.

**First**, detailed and close scrutiny of the biblical text in the original languages offers the opportunity for greater interpretive accuracy. The flourishing of God's people depends upon them faithfully attending to what God has said. Ministers, therefore, must be skilled and accurate interpreters who can communicate God's Word to God's people.

**Second**, the logic of God's work in the world and the precise and varied contours of the gospel are communicated by the linguistic thought-forms and verbal expressions of biblical Hebrew and Greek.

Skilled interpreters will pick up nuances of meaning and shades of expression that translations cannot capture. Because of this, skilled interpreters who know the languages can penetrate into the truth more effectively and communicate with greater freshness the hope and instruction held out in Scripture.

**Third**, translations into any language inevitably shape the biblical text to some extent according to the values, thought-forms and worldviews of the receptor language. Skilled interpreters who know the languages have a greater opportunity to allow Scripture to critique contemporary cultural values and corrupted mindsets.

**Fourth**, God calls ministers to faithfully lead His people in the midst of cultural pressures and unanticipated challenges. These leaders need to have confidence that they have rightly understood what God has said and the mission to which He calls His people. Interpreting the biblical text by skillfully working in Hebrew and Greek offers a more strategic opportunity for ministers to faithfully fulfill God's call.

We affirm the excellent and essential work of translators and publishers of translations so that the Word of God is in the hands of as many people as possible. We also affirm the fruitful and God-blessed ministries of many diligent and God-honoring people who have not learned Hebrew and Greek. We remain strongly committed to training ministry practitioners who excel in interpretation of the Bible in the original languages.

## Christian Worldview

The faculty of Cornerstone Theological Seminary is committed to a curriculum that places emphasis upon Christian worldview formation rooted in biblical exegesis. We believe that effective ministry requires biblical and theological precision. We firmly believe that sloppy theology represents poor stewardship of truth and is often counterproductive in ministry.

At CTS, students are taught to think according to the flow of redemptive history through the meta-narrative approach to theology: creation—fall—redemption—consummation. Consideration is first given to God's design at creation: What did God intend? After establishing the ideal, thought is given to the impact of human sin at the fall of humanity: What are the implications of the fall? Once rebellion, brokenness and incompleteness are considered, thought is given to the influence of Christ's redemptive

work: How has Christ brought restoration? Finally, and with a spirit of anticipation, thought is given to God's plan for complete restoration: What will human existence be like without the presence of sin? This biblically based pattern of thought serves as an invaluable guide for biblical and exegetical work and ministry practice.

This meta-narrative approach to doing theology and ministry is embedded within a variety of CTS courses, though the central focus is within the three-course Systematic Theology sequence (THE-540 SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY I, THE-640 SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY II, THE-641 SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY III).

## Christian Spiritual Formation

In Jesus Christ, God is restoring us to righteous orientation to himself and renewing our relationships with others and with the earth itself. The Spirit of God is empowering God's people to grow in wholeness; to overcome sinful temptations; and to develop attitudes, behaviors and social structures oriented by genuine fellowship with God and enjoyment of mutually genuine relationships with others. Christian spirituality, through Scripture, prayer and other spiritual disciplines rightly directs our relationship with God, our fellow human beings and the earth itself. Within the context of a faith community, we should explore and seek to creatively embody the attitudes, behaviors, social dynamics and life patterns which are appropriate for this process of reorientation. This requires identifying idolatry, attitudes, behaviors and perverse social practices that embody self-destructive selfishness and brokenness and replacing them, by God's grace, with attitudes, behaviors and social practices that honor God, serve others and steward the earth. Nothing less is appropriate for those who follow Jesus Christ in their journey of being conformed to His image.

At CTS, we seek to advance this biblically informed understanding of personal spiritual formation through the Bible and theology core and facilitate the habits, practices and soul-posture necessary for growth in faith in select ministry courses and other programmatic structures. Our intentions in this area are evident across the entire curriculum (Bible/theology/ministry), through our MIN-500 Spiritual Formation course required in all degree programs, our three semester Ministry Residency program and through student mid-point and exit assessments which determine whether a student is making sufficient progress in vocational readiness.

## Leadership Formation

The faculty of Cornerstone Theological Seminary is also committed to a curriculum that places emphasis upon leadership formation. We embrace a biblically based, servant-leader model of leadership. Pastors and others engaged in vocational ministry must be, first and foremost, humble servants. At the same time, they are called upon to render a stewardship of biblical and theological truth, of people and of church or parachurch organizations. Such a calling requires specialized competencies in theological leadership and organizational leadership.

The curriculum of CTS provides opportunity for the development of these necessary competencies through an extensive series of courses in biblical exegesis and systematic theology and through the ministry leadership core of the Master of Divinity and MA in Ministry Leadership degrees. Students are further encouraged to develop these needed competencies while in seminary through required ministry involvement and through various required ministry residencies, practicums and internships.

## Cultural Exegesis and Multicultural Competency

Individuals, families, communities and organizations possess complex and varied narratives that are deeply embedded. Effectiveness in ministry requires the skills of cultural exegesis and multicultural sensitivity, which means that ministry leaders must be able to make meaning of the narratives of individuals and communities and to do so with knowledge, respect and honor. The curriculum at Cornerstone Theological Seminary attends to these important areas. For the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts degree programs, students complete a number of case study assignments across the curriculum using the CTS Ministerial Model. This model aids the ministry leader in making meaning of complex problems from a number of perspectives, including the perspective of culture and context. In addition, students complete assessments and process the results for self-awareness and vocational fit (MIN-500 CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL FORMATION) and cultural intelligence (MIN-560 GLOBAL IMPACT) as a means to facilitate growth in these vital areas. In addition, a variety of lectures and seminars offer an opportunity for all CTS students to engage with Christian leaders and scholars from diverse backgrounds.

## Contextual Learning

A common element of the various CTS degree programs is the high value placed on fostering student growth and development within authentic vocational contexts: contextual learning. A large majority of students enrolled at Cornerstone Theological Seminary are engaged in, or aspire to be engaged in, local church ministry and parachurch ministry. Therefore, it is vital that our students develop the applied skills necessary for effective vocational service in these contexts. For the Master of Divinity, Ministry Residency (6 credits over three semesters) provides applied learning within a ministry context under the mentorship and supervision of a qualified and experienced local church or parachurch ministry leader.