

Prosperity Preaching in North America
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Spring, 2008
Nelson Hall 118
Wednesday 1:30 – 4:20 p.m.
Nelson Hall 118

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Office Hours: Monday 3 p.m.-5 p.m., Wednesday 10 a.m. - noon

This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.

Prosperity preaching is the preaching genre of evangelical ministers of the Word of Faith movement who teach hearers that God wants them to be rich and enjoy divine physical health. The Word of Faith movement is an evangelical subculture that began in North America in 1962. From its humble beginnings in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, thousands of Word of Faith churches have been founded in North America and internationally in countries such as Kenya, Brazil and Korea. The Word of Faith message is proliferated internationally twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week on television networks such as the Trinity Broadcast Network, the Word Network, and Angel Network.

This course presumes that the teachings of the Word of Faith movement, as it relates to financial wealth and physical health, are a distortion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, this course will survey the evolution of prosperity gospel in the context of the North American capitalistic culture. Students will learn history, key doctrine, hermeneutical approaches, and preaching styles of Word of Faith preachers and visit a Word of Faith congregation. With the knowledge that they each gain from this course, students will be able to recognize and refute the efficacy of Word of Faith theology whenever and wherever they find it. Each student will preach one sermon on a text used by Word of Faith preachers using her/his(the student's) own theology and method.

Basic preaching is a pre-requisite for this course.

Course objectives:

1. Students will understand the history, key doctrine, hermeneutical approaches of Word of Faith theology.
2. Students will understand the preaching of Word of Faith preachers as it relates to style, form, structure, and use of story/narrative.
3. Students will be able to recognize and refute the efficacy of Word of Faith theology, as it relates to money, whenever and wherever they find it.

Course Requirements:

1. Students are required to attend every class session and actively participate in class discussions. (12%)
2. Each student will place in the digital dropbox of Blackboard at least one discussion question for each reading assigned during the semester by 6 p.m the day before the assignment is due. (For example, the question for the reading assigned for Wednesday, March 12 is due on Tuesday, March 11 by 6 p.m.) Questions can represent issues or concerns raised by the author that need further clarification or issues and concerns not addressed by the author but which were raised by the reading in the mind of the reader. (8%)
3. Each student will attend at least one lecture/master class and one worship service during the Festival of Theology and submit a 3-4 page summary report. Guidelines are provided on the syllabus. **Due March 12.** (12%)
4. Each student will submit a 7-10 page exegetical paper on a scripture passage on a text provided on this syllabus. The passage chosen should be the same passage to be used to develop the sermon. Guidelines for the exegetical paper are included with this syllabus. **Due April 2.** (15%)
5. **Entire class will worship together at Life of Faith Bible Church on Wednesday, April 9 at 7:00 p.m.** Each student will complete a sermon evaluation. Guidelines are provided in syllabus. **Due April 16.** (20%)
6. **Each student will submit a 2-3 page essay in response to this question: "Preachers on television say that God wants all believers to be rich. Is this what the bible communicates to us or not?"** **Due April 23.**
7. Each student will also preach one 10-15 minute sermon. **Sermon presentations will be made on April 30 and May 7.** Along with the sermon, each student must submit a manuscript or outline of the sermon along with a statement clearly identifying her/his preaching context. (33%)

Meeting Date Topic and Readings

February 13 **Money, Faith, and Capitalism**
Introduction to the Word of Faith movement, overview

"Serving the Two Master" pp. 1-9

"Our Moment in History" pp. 11-36

Wuthnow, Robert. *God and Mammon in America*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1994.

"How to Think about Consumer Culture" pp. 15-31

"The Commodification of Culture" pp. 32-72

Miller, Vincent J. *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2003.

February 20 **Essek William Kenyon**

“The Name of Jesus” pp. 185-192

“The Word, God’s Revelation to Man” pp 193-200

“The Present Ministry of Christ” pp. 201-208

“Healing” pp. 209-216

“The Lordship of Christ” pp. 217-231

Kenyon, E. W. *Basic Bible Course: The Bible in the Light of Our Redemption*.
Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 1999.

“Early Days” pp. 1-8

“Days of Darkness” pp. 9-14

McIntyre, Joe. *E. W. Kenyon and His Message of Faith: The True Story*. Orlando,
FL: Creation House, 1997.

“Plenty” pp. 195-250

Simmons, Dale H. *E. W. Kenyon and the Postbellum Pursuit of Peace, Power and
Plenty* Studies in Evangelicalism; No. 13. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press,
1997.

February 27 **Kenneth E. Hagin and Word of Faith Doctrine and Hermeneutics**

Hagin, Kenneth E. *New Thresholds of Faith*. Tulsa, OK: Rhema Bible Church,
1985.

_____. *Classic Sermons*, 269. Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications,
1993.

Lawson, Terry. *How to Study the Word: Taking the Bible from the Pages to the
Heart*. Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications, 1999. Pp. 39-60

McConnell, D. R. *A Different Gospel: A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the
Modern Faith Movement*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988.
Pp. 30-56

Review Kenneth Hagin sermon

March 5 **Festival of Theology**

- March 12 **Festival of Theology Summary Report Due**
- Oral Roberts and Kenneth Copeland Doctrine and hermeneutics**
 Roberts, Oral. *The Miracle of Seed-Faith*. Tulsa, OK: Oral Roberts Ministries, 1970. pp. 13-34
- Copeland, Kenneth. *The Hundredfold Principle*. Audio Cassette. Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1983.
- Mumford, Debra J. Above All Prosper: A Critical Analysis of the Preaching of Creflo Dollar, Jr. **(To be handed out in class)**
- March 19 **Word of Faith movement and African American preaching traditions**
 Harrison, Milmon F. *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. 131-162
- Mumford, Debra J. “Above All Prosper: A Critical Analysis of the Preaching of Creflo Dollar, Jr.”
- March 26 Research and Study Week
- April 2 **Exegetical papers due**
Word of Faith preaching form and structure
- “A Smorgasbord of Patterns for the Movement of the Sermon” Pp. 177-205.
 Allen, Ronald J. *Interpreting the Gospel: An Introduction to Preaching*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1998.
- “When You Can’t Find an Illustration” Pp. 57-70
 “Good Illustrations and Great Ones” Pp. 71-79.
 “How To Tell a Good Story” Pp.81-89.
- Larson, Mark Galli and Craig Brian. *Preaching That Connects: Using Journalistic Techniques to Add Impact*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. Pp. 71-89
- April 9 Review guidelines for exegetical paper.
Worship at Life of Faith Bible Church
- “Living the Faith Message” pp. 51-80
 “Faith Christian Center” pp. 81-105
 Harrison, Milmon F. *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

April 16 **Life of Faith Bible Church Sermon Evaluation Due**

Word of Faith Critique
Review sermon from Life of Faith Bible Church

Mumford. (To be handed out in class)

“Poverty and Wealth in the Gospels” pp. 168-180

“Poverty and Wealth in the New Testament Church” 181-194

“Ministry and Ethics” 195-208

Perriman, Andrew. *Faith, Health, and Prosperity: A Report on ‘Word of Faith’ and ‘Positive Confession’ Theologies by The Evangelical Alliance (UK) Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals.* Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2003.

April 23 Sermon evaluation and analysis.

April 30 Sermon Presentations

May 7 Sermon Presentations

Festival of Theology Summary Report (Due March 12, 10%)

Sunday, March 3 – Wednesday, March 5 is the annual Festival of Theology. Each student is required to attend one lecture and one worship service. During the festival four preachers will each present a sermon, lecture, and facilitate a master class. In order for students to receive credit for the assignment, they must submit a report on a sermon and lecture and/or master class give by the same preacher. For example, if the student attends the lecture for Anna Carter Florence, she or he is also required to attend the worship service at which Florence is preaching. The following are questions to be answered in 3-4 double spaced page report.

Lecture/Master Class

1. Identify the name of the lecturer/preacher.
2. What was the theme of the lecture?
3. What were the main ideas being conveyed?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the lecturer’s main ideas? Explain why you agree or disagree.

Sermon

1. What was the theme of the sermon?
2. Did the sermon successfully embody the theme of the lecture? If not, what ideas or arguments of the lecture were missing?
3. What stories/illustrations did the preacher use in the sermon?
4. What was the basic structure and form of the sermon?
5. Was the sermon easy to follow and understand?
6. Will you use the preacher’s sermon ideas for your own preaching?

Guidelines for the Exegetical Paper (Due April 2, 15%)

Each student must submit a 7-10 page exegetical paper on a text of their choice. **The paper is In *The Witness of Preaching*, Thomas Long presents a brief method of exegesis for preaching.** Details about what is required in each section are contained in the reading. The reading is posted on the course website. The paper must include each of the following sections:

- I. Getting the Text in View
 - a. Selecting the text
 - b. Reconsider where the text begins and ends
 - c. Establish a reliable translation of the text
- II. Getting Introduced to the Text
 - a. Read the text for basic understanding
 - b. Place the text in its larger context
- III. Attending to the Text
 - a. Listen attentively to the text
- IV. Testing What is Heard in the Text
 - a. Explore the text historically
 - b. Explore the literary character of the text
 - c. Explore the text theologically (God in relation to humanity)
 - d. Check text in commentaries
 - e. "Moving Toward the Sermon:" State the claim of the text upon the hearers and preacher
- V. **This part of the paper is not included in Long's outline**
Write two to three paragraphs about how the results of your exegesis differ from the interpretations of Word preachers

Biblical Texts for Exegetical Paper

Each student must select one of the texts below for their exegetical paper. Each scripture is listed under the name of a Word of Faith preacher so that student can easily determine how the scripture is used by Word preachers to justify their teachings:

Kenyon

Matthew 28:18-20
John 16:23-24
Romans 10:9-10
Hebrews 4:14

Hagin

1 Tim 4:6-16

Copeland

Mark 4:1-8
Galatians 4:6-7
Genesis 26:12-14

Roberts

Galatians 6:7
Luke 6:38
Matthew 25:24-26
Luke 19:21
John 4:37

Dollar

Ecclesiastes 7:12, 9:16, 10:19
Proverbs 11:24, 13:22
James 5:4

Questions for Sermon Evaluation - Life of Faith Bible Church Visit (Due April 16, 20%)

Each student must submit a 3-4 page double-spaced page evaluation the sermon preached during the site visit. The paper must thoroughly and completely answer each of the questions listed below.

1. Through your own personal observation, what was the racial/ethnic make-up, age range, socio-economic status of the hearers?
2. What was/were the biblical text(s) and topic of the message? Did the preacher use the biblical text(s) contextually?
3. What was the basic form and structure (e.g. topical form with a four pages structure) of the sermon? Provide details to justify your selection of a particular form and structure. Was the sermon easy to follow structurally?
4. What was the main theme of the sermon?
5. Did the people sitting near you appear to be engaged in the sermon?
6. Were the stories/illustrations used during the message appropriate for the hearers?
7. How long (in minutes) was the sermon?
8. Where did the preacher stand during the sermon (for example, behind a podium or walk among the congregation)? Was she or he mobile?
9. Did the preacher have any distracting mannerisms (for example, did s/he say “umm” often or hold onto the podium for dear life)?
10. Do you feel the message was communicated effectively?

Other Expectations

Mutual Respect

During class, each person is required to respect her/his classmates and the instructor by arriving to class on time, listening attentively to the thoughts and opinions of others, providing constructive feedback to sermons of others, and turning off cell phones before class begins.

Written Assignments

1. All written assignments should be doubled-spaced.
2. Margins should all be 1-inch (left, right, top, bottom).
3. All ideas and thoughts that are not original should be footnoted. Each footnote should begin a new line, indented the same as amount at paragraphs.
4. Font should be Times New Roman, 12 point.
5. Spell check all assignments before submitting.

All assignments are to be turned in on the due date by 6:00 p.m. through Blackboard Digital Drop Box. **Assignments submitted late will be penalized five points per day.** The only exceptions for late work being penalized are in **cases of medical emergency or death in the family**. Preaching dates will be selected and negotiated in class. Once a date is set, do not expect to change it. Except in the event of a catastrophe, failure to preach on the assigned date is subject to a grade of “zero” for that sermon.

Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities.

Plagiarism

It is expected that students will perform all written and oral assignments with complete academic integrity by only submitting papers and preaching/submitting sermons with their own original thoughts and ideas. When using thoughts and idea of others, students are to properly attribute credit in footnotes. Any instances of plagiarism discovered will be reported to the Dean's office. Two reports of plagiarism constitute grounds for dismissal from LPTS.

Bibliography

- Allen, Ronald J. *Interpreting the Gospel: An Introduction to Preaching*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1998.
- Harrison, Milmon F. *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Kenyon, E. W. *Basic Bible Course: The Bible in the Light of Our Redemption*. Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 1999.
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- McConnell, D. R. *A Different Gospel: A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988.
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- Wuthnow, Robert. *God and Mammon in America*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1994.