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# IS 502 Christian Formation: Vocation of Ministry

Stuart L. Palmer

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**IS502 Christian Formation: Vocation of Ministry**  
**Spring 2005 (February-May)**  
**8:00-10:45 am - Wednesday**  
**3 Semester Units**  
**Anticipated Class Enrollment: 70 students**

**Faculty:**

Stuart L. Palmer, PsyD

Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Psychology

Office: Stanger Hall #409

Office Hours:

Tuesday 4:00-5:30pm

Thursday 4:00-5:30pm

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858-2358

**Course Description**

This course seeks to ask and address the question, How is our vocation as those called to Christian ministry discerned, shaped, and sustained? The purpose of this course is to explore from a Wesleyan perspective the biblical and theological foundations of Christian personhood and vocation by examining the nexus between call to ministry and formation of persons in ministry.

**Course Objectives**

Having successfully completed this course, you should:

1. Understand the nature of Christian vocation (including God's call of all Christian disciples to ministry in church and world) from a Wesleyan perspective;
2. Grasp the relationship between critical reasoning and spirituality and understand their importance for theological reflection on the vocation and practice of ministry;
3. Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and gender issues with regard to their importance for the vocation of ministry;
4. Understand the importance of moral formation and integrity for Christian ministry, with a clear understanding of boundary issues related to ethical conduct;
5. Demonstrate commitment to "the way" of the Christian disciple through immersion in the means of grace;

6. Be able to articulate a coherent narrative of one's own call into God's ministry; and
7. Project a curricular plan consistent with vocational discernment.

### **Mode of Instruction**

The class will be taught using two modes of instruction: (a) We will meet together as one large group for differing levels of instruction, interaction and discussion; (b) The class will be organized into covenant discipleship groups that will emphasize "means of grace", which are integral to the course. At least part of the covenant group meeting time will overlap with scheduled course time.

### **Means of Student Evaluation**

#### 1. Student Participation - 30% of Final Grade

##### Related to course instruction

- Your attendance at all class sessions is expected. If you are absent [for whatever reasons] for more than three class sessions (or the equivalent) you will receive a failing grade. An attendance sheet will be provided for each class session.
- By the conclusion of Module 3 you will have attend two services in a church(es) that is(are) ethnically different from you. This will be the basis for your reflection in your "In-Process" paper for Module 3. If you are currently worshipping in a cross-cultural setting (e.g., international students or other ethnic minority) you should speak with the professors for ways in which you need to adjust this assignment. (5%)
- You are expected to attend your covenant discipleship group. Every group member will have the opportunity to lead a group meeting. Meeting time is built into our Wednesday class period. Specific guidelines and expectations are presented below under the heading "Covenant Discipleship Group Guidelines". (10%)
- Participate in a 4-hour social justice project with your covenant discipleship group. Specific guidelines and expectations are presented below under the heading "Social Justice Project Guidelines". (5%)
- The reading requirements for this course are listed under "Required Texts" and "Required Reading". You will prepare a report to document the degree of your completion of required course reading and listening on the appropriate form in the course/group notebook. This reading report is due at the end of the semester. (10%)

### Related to academic advising

- You will select an academic advisor by the end of the semester and have had one documented conversation with your advisor about your call to ministry and your seminary curricular plan. This is due by the end of the semester and is to be documented on the appropriate form in the course/group notebook.

### 2. "In-Process" Papers - 50% of Final Grade

You will prepare four five-page "in-process" papers that integrate course content, your understanding of your vocation of ministry and assessment survey where appropriate. The first paper (8 %) is due at the end of Module 1 and the second paper (14 %) is due at the end of Module 2. The third paper (14 %) is due at the end of Module 3. The fourth paper (14 %) is due at the end of Module 4. Each student will be provided clear guidelines for paper expectations and criteria for grading. These guidelines are presented on the handout entitled, "Expectations and Grading Criteria for IS 502 VOM Module Papers".

*Module 1 paper is due on March 2, 2005*

*Module 2 paper is due on March 30, 2005*

*Module 3 paper is due on April 20, 2005*

*Module 4 paper is due on May 11, 2005*

### 3. Creative Project - 20% of Final Grade

Presentations will be made on Wednesday, May 11th and Wednesday, May 18th (finals week). Your covenant discipleship group will choose an artistic mode (painting, sculpture, poetry, creative writing, photo essay, original music composition) in order for your group to give expression to your understanding of "vocation of ministry." Or, you may choose a project that communicates course-related material (devotional guide that focuses on "call" and "vocation"; series of lesson plans that deal with "call" and "vocation" for an age-specific class, etc.). Your work should not only reflect your collective and personal reflections but it should also include appropriate aspects of our course content. It is expected that this will be a fresh work.

You are to get approval of your idea before proceeding. This idea is due April 20th in written form to the professors. This is to include a clear and succinct statement of the purpose of your project as well as learning objectives for your presentation. Each person in the group is expected to invest a minimum of 8

hours in the preparation of the project. Projects will be shared in class at the end of the semester.

In addition to the presentation, each group is to document/submit:

1. An individual statement of time investment and a brief description of your contribution to the group project. This is to be documented on the appropriate form in the course/group notebook.
2. For art based projects: Submit a detailed discussion of the message you are portraying about "vocation" and "call."
3. For text based projects: Submit the text material.
4. For visual based projects (power point or video) submit a detailed interpretation and/or information portrayed about "vocation and call".

Creative Project Grading Criteria:

1. How substantial was your individual contribution to the project? (Did your contribution help to move the group project forward to completion in a significant way?)
2. How well did your group present the project to the class? (Did it reflect "one" mind or did it seem pieced together and disjointed?)
3. How well did your project integrate course content and personal reflection? (Does your project demonstrate an understanding of course content in addition to your personal journey?)
4. How well prepared was the written material your group submitted in conjunction with the project? (Style of writing, spelling, grammar, etc.)
5. Time frame. How well did the group presentation stay within the time allotted?

## Required Texts

Foster, R. (1978) Celebration of Discipline. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Foster, R. (1983) Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Grenz, S. & Bell, R. (1995). Betrayal of Trust: Sexual Misconduct in the Pastorate. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Groothuis, R.M. (1997). Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Guinness, O. (1998). The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life. Waco, TX: Word.

- Palmer, P. (2000). Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sire, J.W. (2000). Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Smith, G. (1997). Listening to God in Times of Choice, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Willimon, W. (2000). Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life. Nashville: Abingdon.

### **Required Reading on your Desktop under IS502 VOM Palmer Icon— Supplemental Readings.**

- Johnson, R. "Precis of Ruth Haley Barton, 'Beyond Stereotypes to Partnership,' in *Equal to the Task: Men and Women in Partnership*"
- Mulholland, M. R. "Women and Men: Wives and Husbands"
- Trepagnier, B. (2001). "Deconstructing Categories: The Exposure of Silent Racism". *Symbolic Interaction, Vol. 24. No. 2.*

### **Grading Policy**

#### Papers

All papers must be typed, double-spaced, 1" margin all around, using a 12-point font, such as Times New Roman. Papers must adhere to MLA (Modern Language Association Style) format according to Slade [available in the ATS bookstore and in the library].

Professor Palmer will grade all submitted work and will seek to return your papers to you in a timely fashion. A 1/3 deduction in grade will be assessed for every workday that your paper is late. Late papers receive a grade, but no written feedback. If you need to negotiate an alternate due date with us, please see one of us BEFORE the assignment is due.

#### Grading Guidelines

The grading guidelines found in the 2004-2006 ATS academic catalog will be used for grade assignment. The specific grade format for this course is:

A	95	C	73
A-	90	C-	70

B+	87	D+	67
B	83	D	63
B-	80	D-	60
C+	77	F	below 60

### Incomplete Policy

A grade of "I" denotes course work has not been completed due to an **unavoidable** emergency, which does not include failure to turn in course work or attending to church work or other employment. See the Asbury Seminary Catalog for further clarification.

### **Covenant Discipleship Group Guidelines**

1. By the second week of class, you will be placed in a Covenant Discipleship Group of 5-6 persons. Because spiritual formation is an important part of this course, we have set aside the final 45 minutes of class time for you to meet. We hope that your schedules will permit you to meet longer than 45 minutes - as that is a bare minimum - and a longer meeting time will facilitate group cohesion and trust building. We have also built this time into our weekly schedule to facilitate your ease of meeting so that no one has to juggle his or her schedule to find a meeting time outside of class.
2. Your group will be encouraged to develop a group commitment or covenant that will incorporate the use of Celebration of Discipline and Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline. Each person should have a copy of both.
3. The purpose of this group is to meet together to learn the "means of grace" affirmed throughout Church history, do the related disciplines, hold each other accountable, and encourage each other.
4. The group will meet for one introductory meeting, then for the next eleven weeks it will meet and focus on the inward, outward, and corporate disciplines that facilitate "growth in grace".
5. Each student in the group will be given the opportunity to lead a covenant group session. At the conclusion of each session a volunteer will be sought to lead at the next session.
6. The leader guides the group through the questions from the Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline. (See chart below for dates and assignments).
7. Each student is required to come to group with a written response to the questions for each week as well as having completed the reading from Celebration of Discipline prior to group meeting. Completion of reading and response to questions is to be documented on the appropriate form in the course/group notebook. In addition, each student's responses to questions will

be added to the group notebook to be turned in at the end of the semester and reviewed by the professors.

8. One student in each group will take attendance. Attendance is to be documented on the appropriate form in the course/group notebook. Please NOTE that if you miss more than three discipleship group meetings (for whatever reasons), you will not receive credit for this component of the course.
9. Each group should covenant to keep group conversations confidential among group members.

#### ASSIGNED CHAPTERS AND QUESTIONS:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Chapters</b>	<b>Study Guide Readings and Questions</b>
2/9	Divide and establish group membership	
2/16	Introduction and Chapter 1	Pages 1-15, page 12, questions # 3,7,8
2/23	Chapter 2 and 3	Pages 19-27, page 21, questions #1, 2. page 26, questions #4, 7.
3/2	Chapters 4 and 5	Pages 28-35, page 30, questions #1 and 6; page 34 questions #2 and 5.
3/9	Chapter 6	Pages 39-43; page 41, questions #1, 5, 7
3/16	Chapter 7	Pages 44-47; page 46, questions #1, 5, 8.
3/30	Chapter 8	Pages 48-51; page 50; questions #1, 6, 8.
4/6	Chapter 9	Pages 52-55; page 54; questions #2, 4, 6.
4/13	Chapter 10	Pages 59-62; page 61; questions #1, 5, 7.
4/20	Chapter 11	Pages 63-67; page 65-66; questions #2, 4, 6.
4/27	Chapter 12	Pages 68-71; page 70; questions #3, 4, 9.



5/4	Chapter 13	Pages 72-75; page 74; questions #1, 3, 6.
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## **Social Justice Project Guidelines**

A commitment to social justice is one of the emphases of our Wesleyan tradition. Each group will select a service/mission project. The project is to be completed AS A GROUP and must involve at least 4 hours of service outside the Asbury Seminary community. For example, your group can serve dinner at the Ronald McDonald House in Lexington, work for a soup kitchen, help out at God's Pantry, provide housekeeping or lawn care for a homebound person, etc. Please clear your project with Dr. Palmer. The group is to document on the appropriate forms in the course/group notebook: 1) the attendance of each member, 2) the nature of the project, 3) a group statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) describing how this chosen project is understood theologically as an expression of the groups/individuals participation in the "Kingdom of God", and 4) a group statement about what 3 aspects of the experience stands out for them as significant. This is due at the end of the semester.

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## **MODULES:**

### **Module 1: Understanding the Nature of Christian Call and Vocation from a Wesleyan Perspective**

February 9, 16, 23

#### **Goals:**

At the completion of Module 1, you should:

1. Integrate your sense of what God desires with your personal giftedness;
2. Discuss the relationship between personal responsibility and choice in how you respond or may respond to a perceived call of God;
3. Articulate how God is moving in your life regarding your vocation by using the aspects of vocation based on the Wesleyan quadrilateral.

**February 9: The Nature of Vocation and Call.**

This session provides an introduction to the concept of "call." We will also get organized!

**Reading List:** Guinness, Ch. 1-7  
Palmer, entire book

**Covenant Group:** Organize class into small covenant groups.

**February 16: A Wesleyan Perspective on Vocation and Call**

This week focuses on Wesley's understanding of vocation and call.

**Reading List:** Guinness, chapters 8-14

**Covenant Group:** Begin covenant groups.

**February 23: Vocation, Call, and Me**

This session introduces you to the idea of personal vocational strengths, spiritual gifts, and their relationship to vocation and call

**Reading List:** Guinness, Ch. 15-22  
Smith, Ch. 1-3

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**Means of Evaluation for Module 1- First "In-Process" Position Paper - DUE on March 2, 2005**

Using the material from the first three weeks, develop a vocational position paper that reflects your current understanding of your call to the vocation of ministry, your sense of spiritual gifting, and your personal limitations. Be sure that you clearly integrate information from the required readings and lectures. This information is to be referenced following the MLA format. Typed-double space, 1" margins, 12 cpi font 5-page limit.

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**Module 2: Grasp the relationship between critical reasoning and spirituality and understand their importance for theological reflection on the vocation and practice of ministry**

March 2, 9, 16

**Goals:**

At the completion of this module, you should

1. Articulate your own decision making process and the relative weight of critical thinking, spirituality, and theological reflection in class discussion and in writing.
2. Demonstrate your understanding of the roles of critical reasoning, theological reflection, and spirituality on your call to ministry through "in process" paper.

**March 2: Introduction to Critical thinking & vocation**

Today we will introduce the skill of critical thinking.

**Reading List:** Sire, Ch. 1-4  
Smith, Ch. 4-6

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**DISC inventory – to be completed by March 16<sup>th</sup>**

**March 9: Critical thinking, vocation, & spirituality**

Now we will add the influence of spirituality to our thinking about critical thinking and vocation.

**Reading List:** Sire, Ch. 5-7  
Smith, Ch. 7-8

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**March 16: Critical reasoning, spirituality, and me**

Finally, you will discover more about yourself through the DISC survey and combine this practical information with the previous lectures and discussions to reflect upon your call to ministry.

**Reading List:** Sire, Ch. 8-10  
Smith, Ch. 9-10

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**Means of Evaluation for Module 2 - Second "In-Process" Position Paper - Due on March 30, 2005.**

Using the material from last three weeks of class, develop a vocational position paper that reflects your current understanding of your call to the vocation of ministry and your use of critical thinking, reflection and spirituality in discerning your calling. Also include your understanding of the relationship of critical thinking, reflection and spirituality in the practice of ministry. Be sure that you clearly integrate information from required readings and lectures. This information is to be referenced following the MLA format. Typed-double space, 1" margins, 12 cpi font. 5-page limit.

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**Module 3: Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and gender issues with regard to their importance for the vocation of ministry.**

March 30, April 6, 13

**Goals:**

At the completion of this module, you should

1. Describe key issues and problems, which affect ethnic minorities and their leadership;
2. Explain the reality of racism and gender issues, their origins and the negative impact they have on building the Kingdom of God;
3. Discuss how racism affects inter-ethnic and inter-church relations and how to effectively minister in such contexts.

During this module [or before] you will attend two worship services in church(es) that is culturally different from you.

**March 30: Ministry in the Worldwide Kingdom of God**

Vocation of ministry in a multi-ethnic, global Kingdom of God

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**April 6: Ethnic realities in America**

Ethnic nature of America and the sober realities needing to be faced.

**Reading List:** Barbara Trepagnier (under Icon Supplemental Readings)

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**April 13: Gender and the Vocation of Ministry**

Men and women working together in the Kingdom of God. Biblical foundations for women in ministry

**Reading List:** Grootius, entire book;

Reg Johnson (under Icon Supplemental Readings)

M. Robert Mulholland (under Icon Supplemental Readings)

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**Means of Evaluation for Module 3 - Third "In-Process" Position Paper - Due on April 20, 2005.**

During this module you will attend twice the worship services of a church where the church is ethnically different from yourself. Your paper is to focus on the experience of being a minority in this congregation, your awareness of your own prejudicial beliefs or myths, and how you plan to address them. Also, in this paper you are to reflect on your relative ease or discomfort of working with women in ministry. Be sure that you clearly integrate information from the required readings and lecture information. This information is to be referenced following the MLA format. Typed-double space, 1" margins, 12cpi font 5-page limit.

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**Module 4: Understand the importance of character, moral formation and integrity for Christian ministry, with a clear understanding of boundary issues related to ethical conduct**

April 20, 27, May 4

**Goals:**

By the completion of the module, you should

1. Discuss the importance of the character of and the maintenance of a sense of wholeness by a Christian minister;

2. Identify ways to maintain emotional and physical boundaries with people;
3. Identify ways in which boundary violations occur;
4. Explain the relationship between moral formation, individual integrity, and the vocation of ministry.

**April 20: Character, Moral formation & integrity**

**Reading List:** Willimon, entire book  
Grenz & Bell, Ch. 1, 2

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**April 27: Morality & Boundaries, Part I**

**Reading List:** Grenz & Bell, Ch. 3, 4, & 6

**Covenant Group:** Continue covenant groups.

**May 4: Boundary issues, Part II**

**Reading List:** Grenz & Bell, Ch. 5 & 7

**Covenant Group:** Last covenant group meeting.

**Means of Evaluation for Module 4 - Fourth "In-Process" Position Paper - Due on May 11, 2005.**

Using the material from the last 3 weeks of class, develop a vocational position paper that reflects your current understanding of your call to the vocation of ministry in light of the place of moral character, integrity and appropriate boundaries in ministry. Be sure that you clearly integrate information from the required readings and lectures. This information is to be referenced following the MLA format. Typed-double space, 1" margins, 12 cpi font. 5-page limit.

**Module 5: Articulating a coherent narrative of one's own call into God's ministry**

**May 11th and May 18th (finals week 8-10am)**

Each Covenant Discipleship group will work together to develop a creative presentation of their understanding of their vocation of ministry.

