



Community Formation:
The Witness of the Old and New Testaments

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Instructors

Locations and Dates

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| Arizona Mission Center | April 30-May 2, 2010 | Nii/Linkhart |
| Farwest/Midlands Mission Centers | May 21-23, 2010 | Luffman/Fisher |
| Inland West Mission Center | April 30-May 2, 2010 | Luffman/Fisher |
| Oklahoma Mission Center | May 21-23, 2010 | Oiler/Linkhart |

Course Description

Community Formation: The Witness of the Old and New Testaments will explore the communities of Israel and the general near east and those communities' body of scripture. Students will glean from this study the relevant meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures and the early Christian Scriptures for this time and day. Intentional connections will be made between course content and mission lived out as we explore together the questions: What role does/should scripture play in the life of the church? How can we "hear" God's voice in ancient texts? How can scripture shape and form us as faithful disciples in the contexts that we find ourselves in? What role does scripture play in witness? How do we "look at, look with, and walk with" scripture?

Required Texts

1. *An Introduction to the Bible* [Revised Edition], by Clyde E. Fant, Donald W. Musser, and Mitchell G. Reddish, Abingdon Press, 2001
2. *Bible*. An excellent edition is: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*, edited by Michael D. Coogan; Augmented 3rd Edition (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). But any other good scholarly study edition of the NRSV **which includes the Apocrypha** will be fine.

Session One: Orientation to the Course of Study: Community Formation and the Witness of the Old and New Testaments

Primary Objectives

1. Understand the place of the Bible in Western culture
2. Become aware of, and familiar with, methods and tools for studying the Bible
3. Discover the origins of the development of the Bible
4. Become familiar with the culture and geographic context of the Bible
5. Demonstrate why Scripture matters!

Required Readings

[Readings should be done before class sessions commence.]

1. The text: *An Introduction to the Bible [Revised]*, by Fant, Musser and Reddish, chapters 1 – 4, pages 21 – 94
2. *Community of Christ Statement on Scripture*

Session Two: The Settlement of Canaan

Primary Objectives

1. Understand the power of common-story in community formation
2. Understand the three formation models of Israel in Canaan and their theological consequences
3. Contemplate how we use (and can better use) common story to form community today.

Required Reading

The following reading must be done before class due to time constraints:

1. Fant, Musser & Reddish, Chapter 6
2. Joshua
3. Judges

The following reading should be done before class so that the student will be able to more fully contribute to the class community:

1. Fant, Musser & Reddish, Chapters 1-5
2. Genesis 9:18-27 and the annotation in the NRSV that accompanies it.

The following may be helpful to understand the roots of conflict between the Israelite herdsmen and the Canaanite farmers:

1. Malcolm Gladwell's "Outliers: The Story of Success", Chapter 6.

Session Three: Judah's Back!

Primary Objectives:

1. Understand "Zionic vision" as a means of community formation
2. Understand the Suffering Servant in its original context as a representation of the community, not just as leader or messiah.
3. See how scripture writing helped form/maintain the community
4. Contemplate how we have used Zionic vision, scripture, and Suffering Servant motifs to create community in our faith tradition

Required Reading:

The following reading must be done before class due to time constraints:

1. Fant, Musser & Reddish, Chapter 11
2. Isaiah Ch's 40-55
3. Ezekiel Ch's 33-38

Session Four: Better than Ezra

Primary Objectives:

1. Understand the debate over racial/family purity in the restoration of Judah between Ezra/Neh. (standing for racial purity) and the anonymous writers of Ruth/Jonah (a more inclusive vision).
2. See the hard issues of community financing in a 6th century BCE setting.
3. By this lesson, we should really start to have hard conversations about community boundaries and Universalism.

Required Reading:

The following reading must be done before class due to time constraints:

1. Fant, Musser & Reddish, Chapter 12
2. Ezra, Nehemiah
3. Haggai
4. Ruth or Jonah

Session Five: The Intertestamental Period: The Community Continues to Form

Primary Objectives

1. Understand Judaism in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, including the political, religious and literary developments of the time
2. Discover the contribution of literary works like Daniel and the influence of the Apocrypha in the community of faith

Required Readings

1. The text: *An Introduction to the Bible [Revised]*, chapters 14 & 15, pages 251 – 291
2. I Maccabees, chapters 1 – 5; Daniel, chapters 1 – 3, 7; II Maccabees, chapters 6 & 7

Session Six: The Origins and Early Development of the Christian Tradition - - The Gospels

Primary Objectives

1. Understand the development of the Gospels in the New Testament corpus and their influence in the formation of the community of faith
2. Trace the development of the Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark, Luke] and the Gospel of John and their significance for the witness of the community of faith

Required Reading

1. The text: *An Introduction to the Bible [Revised]*, chapters 16 – 18, pages 295 – 377
2. Luke, chapters 1 – 3, 10:25 – 11:13; Mark, chapters 1 – 2:28, 3:13 – 35, 4:1 – 6:6, 8:1 – 11:19; Matthew, chapters 5 – 7, 21:1 – 17; John, chapters 1:1 – 4, 9:1 – 10:39, 20:1 - 29

Session Seven: The Origins and Early Development of the Christian Tradition: The Acts of the Apostles and the Impact of Paul

Primary Objectives

1. Become conversant with Luke's missional/theological trajectory
2. Understand the significance of the Apostle Paul for the "Gentile Mission" and for the formation of the Christian tradition

3. See how Scripture was formed in the First Century, ce, and how its formation contributed to the formation of the Christian faith

Required Readings

1. The text: *An Introduction to the Bible [Revised]*, chapters 19 – 21
2. Acts, chapters 1 – 2, 5:27 – 6:15, 7:54 – 9:31, 10, 15, 16:1 – 18:17, 19:1 – 10, 22:1 – 28:31; Galatians; I Corinthians, chapters 1:1 – 25, 3:1 – 9:7, 12:12 – 13:13, 15:1 – 28; Philemon; Romans, chapters 3:1 – 20, 4:13 – 25, 5, 8:1 – 39, 12

Session Eight: The Origins and Early Development of the Christian Tradition: The Community Responds to the Delay of the Lord’s Coming, to Schism, and to Persecution

Primary Objectives

1. Become aware of the significance of the faithful “catholic” response of the community of faith to issues confronting the church
2. Understand the significance these texts had on moving the church from charisma to institution
3. Understand the place of “right beliefs” [doctrine] in the development of the early Christian church - - “what the church of Jesus Christ believe, teaches, and confesses”
4. See how the church received encouragement from these early epistles and were enabled to confront and withstand conflict and persecution

Required Reading

1. The text: *An Introduction to the Bible [Revised]*, chapters 22 & 23
2. James, chapters 1 & 2; I John, chapters 1 & 4; Colossians, chapter 2; Ephesians, chapter 3; II Thessalonians, chapter 2; I Timothy, chapter 4; Hebrews, chapters 8, 9:11 – 10:25, 11:1 – 12:2; Revelation, chapters 1 – 7, 12:1 – 14:13; 19:1 – 22:5

Contact Information

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