

SEMINARY AND A HOME MISSIONARY

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I am currently a missionary pastor serving in northeast Nebraska in a city called South Sioux City. It is hard to believe that the United States has become a mission field. Unfortunately, the “Christian” church as a whole is like the church in Sardis, which had the reputation of being alive, but in reality was dead. I graduated from Bible College in 1995 and have been in ministry since that time. Because of the challenging times in which we live the Lord pressed upon my heart the need to be sharper in the ministry and to obtain more learning. I currently pastor a small Bible church. I am Reformed in my soteriology, premillennial, and very conservative theologically. Finding a school that was affordable, that would allow me to stay in my current ministry, and that would be like-minded was a challenge. I came across Western Reformed Seminary, which seemed to fit the bill. I enrolled at WRS two years ago in the distance learning program (the Pastoral Mentorship Program, PMP). I am currently pursuing a Masters in Theological Studies with a double minor in historical theology and biblical counseling. Most schools have strayed theologically from the historic orthodox faith and are not nouthetic in counseling (the biblical method promoted by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, NANC). This school is teaching sound doctrine and believes in the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures for counseling. Having a NANC executive board member, Dr. Backus, in charge of the counseling program was a pleasant surprise. The seminary may not have the “bling” of most seminaries, but that was not the reason I chose to study with them. What I find here are very small classes, but the upside is that you are able to build relationships with other students and the professors better, which is a blessing. A small class also guarantees that enough time will be given for any personal questions that you may have. I find the professors to be academically stimulating, balanced, relevant, and caring for their students. Even though I am not Presbyterian, we have a common Reformed faith and a passion to serve our Lord and Savior.

The seminary has already enhanced my ministry greatly. Working in the trenches I find that the more I learn of our great Lord and Savior, the more I love him and desire to serve him. WRS has only helped to cultivate a passion for Christ. For example, this past year at the PMP module during a class I took called “The Life and Epistles of Paul,” I was challenged in many ways. One way was unexpected, for it happened during a side note in the class. Dr. Battle talked about how Paul taught that God rewards the “labor” in glory. It was the proper labor unto the Lord, not “the results” of the labor, that was important. I went back home encouraged in ways not expected. Being a church planter and not using worldly or pragmatic means is hard because you don’t visibly see lots of “results.” I came back even more eager to labor for the Lord.

WRS has helped in so many ways. The most important way is that it has made me sharper and more balanced in ministry. Many of the assignments can be directly incorporated

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into ministry and are a great blessing first to me personally and secondly to the body in the church. They allow you to go at your own pace. What I enjoy most are professors that are very smart, yet are not interested in pursuing knowledge for the sake of knowledge. They pursue knowledge for the sake of ultimately pursuing Christ and walking upright with him. The goal is equipping men to succeed with Christ in the ministry. My respect and admiration for the professors has grown. They are men of God and in many ways are missionaries like me. They are very accomplished men who have chosen to use their skills in this small but effective seminary for God's glory, depending on him to raise up churches and people to provide for the seminary and their livelihood.

As you can see, WRS is the perfect fit for this missionary pastor. May the Lord raise up men serious about serving the Lord and holding to the historic orthodox faith. May the Lord direct many of them to WRS. A seminary like WRS is much needed, and I am grateful to the Lord for it! May the Lord bless the labor of WRS for the next twenty-five years!