

Rejoice, Believer in the Lord*John Newton (1725–1807)*

Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,
 who makes your cause His own;
 the hope that's built upon His Word
 can ne'er be overthrown.

Though many foes beset your road,
 and feeble is your arm,
 your life is hid with Christ in God
 beyond the reach of harm.

Weak as you are, you shall not faint
 or fainting shall not die!
 Jesus, the strength of ev'ry saint,
 will aid you from on high.

Though sometimes unperceived by sense,
 faith sees Him always near!
 a Guide, a Glory, a Defense;
 then what have you to fear?

As surely as He overcame
 and triumphed once for you,
 so surely you that love His name
 shall in Him triumph too.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Central Seminary's Doctor of Ministry***Kevin T. Bauder*

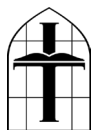
As a rule, pastors and other vocational ministers are more effective if they have been educated in biblical languages, biblical interpretation, Scriptural content, systematic and biblical theology, preaching, and ministry methods. While plenty of men have pastored decently who did not possess all these tools, most ministers are more effective if they have mastered them. The standard educational program that equips potential pastors in these areas is the Master of Divinity. That is why the M.Div. is considered the standard degree for ministry preparation.

Seminary preparation must not be confused with the kind of education that one finds in a Bible institute or Bible college. Colleges and institutes exist to train Christian *workers*. They equip people to become good Sunday school teachers, deacons, and youth leaders. They are valuable for that purpose. Seminaries, however, train Christian *leaders*. As 1 Timothy 3 makes clear, Christian leaders must meet requirements that ordinary workers do not. The M.Div. offers basic preparation for effective leadership as a pastor, missionary, or other vocational minister.

People of ordinary giftedness and intelligence regularly complete M.Div. degrees. That is appropriate, because pastors don't need to be more than ordinary men, though they do need to be faithful and persistent. Some pastors, however, have been given greater-than-ordinary gifts. If they use these gifts rightly, these are the elders who will "rule well" as they labor in the Word and doctrine.

These gifted ministers may think about pursuing advanced training, perhaps in the form of a Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Theology in biblical or theological studies. Both the Ph.D. and the Th.D., however, are research degrees. Their purpose is to prepare professors for a life of research and writing. These are important tasks, and Ph.D. programs have a use. But research and writing is not the same game as pastoral ministry. Becoming a better researcher and writer will not necessarily help a man to become a better pastor.

If a man intends to be a pastor, missionary, or other practitioner of hands-on ministry, he would do better to pursue a Doctor of Ministry program. The



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D.Min. is specifically oriented toward people in active, ongoing ministry. While it does help to sharpen the student's academic skills, its main purpose is to help effective ministers become even more effective in their present work.

Central Baptist Theological Seminary has offered the Doctor of Ministry degree for many decades. Our program is targeted toward a specific purpose: public ministry. This purpose includes preaching, which we understand as the public proclamation of the Word of God. It goes beyond preaching, however, to include the full orbit of public ministry.

The core course in Central Seminary's program is "Shepherding the People of God," taught by Dr. Greg Steikes. He took his M.Div. at Central Seminary while he was the youth pastor at Fourth Baptist Church. He has subsequently pastored multiple churches, and he is still a pastor. He received his Ph.D. in New Testament from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and he also teaches at Bob Jones University. His course addresses the unique challenges that pastors face while shepherding Christ's flock during the Twenty-First Century.

Students in Central Seminary's D.Min. program take three preaching courses. Since a seminary graduate should already know how to preach epistolary and other discursive literature, these courses focus on preaching other biblical genres. One is a course in "Preaching Narrative Literature," taught by Dr. Steve Thomas, pastor of Huron Baptist Church in Flat Rock, Michigan. Dr. Thomas has pursued doctoral work in multiple institutions and holds a D.Min. from Ligonier Academy. Another course, "Preaching Poems, Proverbs, and Parables," is taught by Dr. Bryan Augsburger, who pastors First Baptist Church in Arlington Heights, Illinois, and who holds a D.Min. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. A separate course in "Preaching Prophetic Literature" is taught by Dr. Mike Stallard, who has pastored multiple churches and is International Ministries Director for the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. Dr. Stallard's Ph.D. is from Dallas Theological Seminary.

Another aspect of public ministry is the worship of the church. The Central Seminary D.Min. includes a course on "Public Worship," taught by Dr. Scott Aniol, who has been a pastor in multiple churches. His Ph.D. is from Southwestern Baptist Seminary, where he also was the head of the Ph.D. program for church worship. Dr. Aniol presently serves as executive vice president and editor in chief for G3 Ministries.

As American culture becomes more secular, apologetics is becoming a larger and larger part of public ministry. Central Seminary's D.Min. program includes a specialized course in "Public Defense of the Faith," taught by Dr. Michael Riley. For the past ten years Dr. Riley has pastored Calvary Baptist Church in Wakefield, Michigan. He holds the Ph.D. in apologetics from Westminster Theological Seminary.

The final course in Central Seminary's D.Min. program is taught by Dr. Kevin T. Bauder, who holds doctorates from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Dallas Theological Seminary. This course is entitled "Hermeneutics and Homiletics," but its actual content varies each time it is taught. The course is always issue-oriented. It examines social trends for their theological implications, looking for ways in which professing Christians have capitulated biblical truth, and seeking biblical responses to the core questions. Among other topics the course deals with issues such as homosexuality, transgenderism, and critical theory as it prepares pastors to guide their churches through these mine fields.

Central Seminary approaches education from a unique set of commitments. Each of these courses is taught from a perspective that is Baptist, fundamentalistic and separatist, dispensationalist, cessationist, complementarian, and both theologically and methodologically conservative. Students can expect to hear these perspectives articulated and defended.

Central Seminary is accredited through the Association of Theological Schools, which is the standard body that accredits seminaries. The accreditor permits us to offer our courses through both in-person classroom experience and through synchronous on-line education, using a virtual classroom. Every class includes students using both platforms, and some students alternate between them from course to course.

Admission to the D.Min. program requires a student to hold the M.Div. degree or its equivalent. We are sometimes able to help students who do not have the M.Div. to achieve equivalence by combining their doctoral studies with several master's level courses (which are also offered through synchronous on-line education).

Every course in the D.Min. program is a ministry course. None is purely academic. Every course will require each student to integrate his learnings directly into his current ministry. In other words, the benefits of the program are direct and immediate, beginning with the first course.

Through the month of July, Central Seminary is waiving the application fee for the D.Min. program. We will also give you your first course tuition free. If you are a pastor, missionary, or other vocational minister, and if you have thought about pursuing more advanced training, this could be your best opportunity. You can apply or get more information here.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
