

General Topics :: Relevance and Usefulness of Seminary?

Relevance and Usefulness of Seminary? - posted by pppastor, on: 2005/6/10 13:30

Hello to all,

I recently discovered this amazing site, and have quickly become a huge fan. My heart is still burning from the "Ten Shekels and a Shirt" message. WOW!

Anyway, I have a question whose answer will greatly effect the path that I take in my ministry. I'm hoping you all can give me some advice.

As a young pastor, I am continually driven to learn more about our magnificent God. It is in my heart to know as much as possible, so that I may be better at leading others to the knowledge of God. I have found myself searching my heart for the best path in which I can pursue this desire. In this light, the idea of seminary immediately comes in my mind.

What is the consensus regarding seminary? Undoubtedly I would benefit from a formal education in many areas, but will it help to form me into a more useful vessel in the eyes of God? Considering the financial, personal, and spiritual commitment that would be required, I want to solicate other opinions. I have spoken with numerous seminarians that recommend a Masters of Divinity. But I have also encountered a significant number who advise me to "not waste my time". I welcome any and all responses. Thanks in advance.

Re: Relevance and Usefulness of Seminary? - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/10 14:17

pppastor

This is such a difficult question to answer in a general way. I did 3 years at Bible College almost 40 years ago and up to 2 or 3 years ago might well have said a 'waste of time', except that I knew God had guided my steps there. The reason I would have said it was a waste of time was that I never used any of the stuff I learned there... until I started to get involved with these forums!!

be sure you make your own mind up on this one; then you will only have yourself to blame! ;-)

Re: Brother Ron - posted by dohzman (), on: 2005/6/10 21:31

And now your a teacher ,in prehaps, the largest bible school in the world.

Re: Relevance and Usefulness of Seminary? - posted by tinluke (), on: 2005/6/10 23:05

Hi Pppastor,

I would recomend that you listen to Pastor Carter Conlon's testimony. He is the senior pastor of Times Square Church in NY. He has never attended seminary, but God called him and uses him in an amazming way. I think the choice is different for everyone. True wisdom comes from the heart of God. I know alot of pastors who have alot of bible knowledge, but they don't know the heart of God. We can have all the biblical knowlege in the world, but without God's anointing we can never bring life to a dying world.

<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/visit.php?lid=2089> Carter Conlon's testimony "He lives in me"

Re: Relevance and Usefulness of Seminary? - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/6/11 0:11

:-P

Oh there is some good comments here...

First off a warm welcome brother! Got myself into a bit of trouble here many, many, moons ago on this very subject and it was due to the fact that I didn't know what I was talking about in the realm of higher education. There is any vast number of ways that you may be led to pursue the walk that the Lord has in mind, but only one that is of importance, the one He chooses. In one sense, and sure I am a bit partial but would think that one could get quite an education right here as so wonderfully stated by our brother Dohzman :-D It certainly has been that and more for myself...

Just as well our webmaster here Greg, just completed a round of study at a bible college out here in California and surely would have some great input. Guess the consensus would ultimately be to follow where the Lord leads as simple as that sounds, just to hear that admission from Ron is quite telling, that after so many years... Makes me wonder, so is there still a possibility that the Algebra I learned in High School actually may have some relevance after all? :-P

Glad you are here brother.

Re: who is the final authority of your truth? - posted by roadsign (), on: 2005/6/11 8:53

I feel that the greatest concern is not so much which seminary, or if seminary, but who is the authority of your mind. No seminary teaches the perfect revealed truth, as much as they may believe that they are the closest to the truth. I'm not denying that they have a lot to offer. I'm saying that one must learn to distinguish between the word from man and the word from God.

Many times, when I hear a preacher, I can guess where they were taught, just by what they said. He (or she) preached just as he was taught. It may have been good material, but they got it second hand, pre-digested from MAN, and not necessarily from the Spirit. It missed the "punch".

God desires to give timely messages for the church - messages that are relevant for the PEOPLE at that time. So that's why one must first of all learn to be taught by the Spirit. And that happens in the wilderness - alone with God. It happens through loneliness, neediness, and brokenness.

I call it (<http://www.thewayback.net/articles/sacredplace.htm>) The Sacred Place of Loneliness - that is God's seminary.

Diane

it keeps getting better - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/6/11 10:28

Mat 13:54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

Mat 13:55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

Mat 13:56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?

Good stuff sister, believe the word is "unction".

Re: the punch - posted by roadsign (), on: 2005/6/11 10:57

Quote:

-----believe the word is "unction"

punch = unction = fire in the pulpit...Whatever you call it, it's still not the popular word for the day - whether one comes from seminary or not.

One advantage of seminary is that you can get a job. A church will be more likely to hire you than if you have no credentials. No doubt God uses that avenue to provide for material needs. On the other hand, when that kind of security comes ahead of surrendering all for the sake of Christ, then the message will be weakened by the need for man's approval. When the denominational affiliation becomes one's highest authority, then one is in bondage to man, and not under the authority of the Spirit.

George Muller, when he was pastoring a church, was called by God to give up his salary and trust God to meet his needs. And look what God did through his life - building many orphanages - all based on faith - letting God provide all along the way.

I don't use this example to say that every minister must do this before they can be used by God, just to say that the Lord must be the authority, regardless of education, status, position or whatever.

Diane

Re: Relevance and Usefulness of Seminary? - posted by Globachio (), on: 2005/6/11 15:11

Quote:

What is the consensus regarding seminary? Undoubtedly I would benefit from a formal education in many areas, but will it help to form me into a more useful vessel in the eyes of God?

Seminary may be helpful, but not necessarily so. Unlike some others, I would say it depends on *which* seminary you attend. E.g., I graduated from two of them (one Roman the other Lutheran) and, after being converted, found that what I received from them was dreadful. Theirs was NOT a theological education, but a political indoctrination. But that's pretty typical for mainline sems. However, given the right seminary I cannot but think that you would benefit tremendously.

Also, I do not think it possible to receive the same kind of education elsewhere that you can in a solid seminary. The give-and-take of various viewpoints is invaluable. The languages you'd learn would be much broader and deeper than anything you could get online or from a book. A good question-and-answer period in a classroom can provide a person with new, deeper, and broader understandings of our Lord and His Word that I do not think are possible elsewhere. Just sitting at a dinner table with other students and discussing readings, classes, perspectives, etc. is a wonderful opportunity.

Also required homework, papers, tests, and theses instill within the student a much-needed discipline. And discipline is an absolute requirement.

I'm not disagreeing that the Spirit is our greatest Teacher. Of course He is. I'm just saying that, like Paul with Timothy, He can work through human beings.

If you can afford it, if you can find a good school, and if the Lord is leading you, then go for it. You say you're young. Then I can only say that a good seminary will give you the education and experience of a lifetime.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/6/11 16:06

I think seminary is a fine idea. Obviously no one here assumes that all seminaries are equal or that bible knowledge is the same as knowing Jesus personally...but it's a good thing to have skillful bible teachers in the church. Seminaries can teach things that are harder to learn on "the outside."

I know many people have had negative experiences with liberal education or have seen how a simple country boy can preach with more life and power than a vain scholar but that shouldn't reflect badly on seminary. I've heard many Christians jokingly refer to seminaries as "cemeteries" with a twinkle in their eyes. This too is prideful vanity.

As I was growing up, my uncle Gary had a profound impact on my walk with the Lord. Even now, when we are able, we'll spend 6-7 hours sharing from the Word...even if we have to meet in truck stops. Ever since I was very young he always, always, always, had time to discuss scriptures with me. His love of the Word is so simple and evident that I often forget he has PhDs' in Hebrew and Greek.

Why do I love my time with him? So I can learn how to parse verbs or discussed double middle root consonants? No! Actually, when he speaks about the Lord he has a child-like wonder, not a scholarly posture.

He is skillful and diligent in describing and establishing through scriptures the person of Jesus that is so evident in Him.

Though he currently chairs Old Testament studies at Weinbrenner Seminary here in Ohio, he was eagerly reading his Hebrew and Greek bibles during those when he pastored 20-30 member congregations in little country churches. I imagine if he left his position he would use his retirement to continue learning.

...And breaking bread with his nephew at a truck stop from time to time.

So I say all this with a favorable outlook on seminaries. Since you love the Lord, if you feel interested in going then perhaps the Lord has put this desire in you to bless the family.

Uncle Gary told me a story about a rabbi he studied with at New York University. The professor asked him if Gary believed that the bible was the actual Word of God. My uncle replied that he did indeed believe that. The teacher told him, "I have dedicated my life to the study of the Hebrew Old Testament and not even I believe that these are God's words. Therefore, if I as an unbeliever have tried to master these texts, then one who believes will seem to me to be a hypocrite if he does not spend his life trying to learn this book."

Through all of us may give our entire hearts to God, not all of us can vocationally dedicate our entire lives to the hard profitable work of bible scholarship...so brother if you are able to dedicate your life to a fuller and deeper understanding of the Word, then I bless your journey.

MC

Re: Relevance and Usefulness of Seminary? - posted by ReceivedText, on: 2005/6/11 16:23

Interesting question. Very important though.

Biblical training in the apostles' doctrine is essential and should be placed as a high priority in the church.

The problem I always had with Bible College (have my BA in theology myself) is this: Why do you have to go off to Bible College to get the information necessary to teach the saints? Why can't this be available in the local church?? I say it should be.

While there is nothing wrong with Bible College as such, most I could not recommend. So many are liberal and filled with fruitless or false information.

Another thing to think about. I noticed that those teaching at Bible College had little practical ministry experience. My friends and I noted that when you teach, you are reproducing yourself to an extent. We asked, "Why would I want to be a reproduction of this man?" If we are a copy of this man, we will only produce what he produced. And for us, we wanted to produce millions of souls for the kingdom. (We were pretty zealous!)

This is all pretty extreme for most people. But we were young and I think we had an element of truth.

So why don't we have seminary level education in the local church? I think people aren't hungry enough to make time to learn. How hungry are we for God?

RT

Re: - posted by Joshua99 (), on: 2005/6/24 0:18

road sign, this is indeed The Word of the Lord today!

Quote:
-----one must first of all learn to be taught by the Spirit. And that happens in the wilderness - alone with God. It happens through loneliness, neediness, and brokenness.

Quote:
-----I call it The Sacred Place of Loneliness - that is God's seminary

You know when Truth is spoken, it's when it hits you right in the heart..and says YES! Thank You, Diane :-)