

## What is the Lightbearers Institute?

The Lightbearers Institute is the primary teaching element in the Lightbearers Discipleship Community. It is a classroom setting where over the span of two years, students attend over fifty class sessions and complete two courses: Biblical Survey and Theology and Practice. The Institute seeks to give students Biblical literacy and sound doctrine, equipping them as church members for a lifetime and then stepping away to allow their churches will build upon this introductory foundational knowledge. In addition to participating in the Institute, students in a Lightbearers Discipleship Community live in intentional small groups led by a house leader, meet regularly with a mentor from their local church and are exposed to the work of the body of Christ among the nations. Our prayer is that these commitments connect students for life with Jesus, his people and his plan for the ends of the earth while we use their rental income to fund mission projects in Asia and northern Africa.

Lightbearers is not the church but, rather, exists to serve the local church. This conviction has impact in many areas, including the fact that the Lightbearers Institute is primarily taught by local pastors in order to emphasize to students our ministry's subordinate role and to introduce students to several healthy local churches. Remaining classes are taught by Lightbearers staff members and, in some instances, church laymen and laywomen.

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## Week 18: Ecclesiology 1 - What is the Church?

**Thesis:** Throughout the Bible, there has always been a people of God. God has always worked to create a people who know Him and worship Him that He can dwell among. For this reason, the church is not optional but is necessary for believers. The church is a vital piece of God's redemptive purposes on earth and the place where we live out our faith and become more like Christ, who is the head of the church. The church often gets a bad rap in the 21st century and, to be sure, the church has committed grievous sins in its history. That said, we don't turn our back on the church because of her flaws; we work to correct them. A non-negotiable part of loving Jesus is loving his bride.

**Primary Objectives:** At the conclusion of this session, students should understand: 1) The church is not an add-on to faith in Christ but a non-negotiable aspect of faith; 2) The church has both a local and a universal aspect; 3) The church is described as both the body and bride of Christ; 4) God desires the purity of his church—a quality which depends on the work of God and the diligence of individuals in the church; and 5) God's design is for individuals to hold roles of leadership and authority within the church, and he holds those individuals accountable for their lifestyle and leadership.

**Key Readings:** Exodus 24, Nehemiah 8, Matthew 13, Acts 2:37-47, **1 Thessalonians 1**, Revelation 2-3

### Things to Remember:

- The Lightbearers Institute aims to teach Biblical literacy and doctrinal soundness. Christian unity and a love of Scripture should be displayed above the ability to win an argument. On potentially contentious doctrines, we primarily want to emphasize to students the bounds of historical evangelical orthodox faith. You are free to outline your particular opinion on these doctrines, but please acknowledge to students where there is notable legitimate debate on an issue.
- Class sessions usually run for 90 minutes and take place in an academic setting (students seated at tables), but please communicate with your local campus staff for exact details and location.
- In an effort to encourage students to engage with Scripture, students have assigned key readings (listed above), so it is wise to reference some of these readings. We do not ensure students have completed the assigned readings but mentioning and/or discussing these readings, particularly the bolded chapter, during class reinforces to students the need to complete these readings.
- Lightbearers Theology and Practice course follows an outline loosely based on Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology. Please note, however, that students have not read Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem.
- Please prepare an outline for students. A sample outline follows, but please note that this material is suggestive rather than prescriptive. Please use this sample to whatever extent is helpful to you, and communicate with local campus staff with any specific questions you have.
- Our most successful instructors consistently do three things: 1. Demonstrate clearly that their teaching and opinions are based in Scripture; 2. Communicate with students in an engaging manner; 3. Have a passion for the Scriptures and the God who inspired them.

**Proposed Teaching Outline**

TOPIC		CHAPTERS	TIME
<b>I.</b>	<b>The Nature, Attributes and Roles of the Church</b>	<b>(44-46)</b>	<b>(60 min.)</b>
A.	The Church: Its Nature, Its Marks, and Its Purposes	(44)	(30 min.)
B.	The Purity and the Unity of the Church	(45)	(15 min.)
C.	The Power of the Church	(46)	(15 min.)
<b>II.</b>	<b>Church Government</b>	<b>(47)</b>	<b>(30 min.)</b>
A.	In Scripture	(47)	(15 min.)
B.	Today	(47)	(15 min.)

**Spring Class Sequence**

WEEK	DOCTRINES
(1)	Fall Review
(2-3)	Sanctification
(4)	Disciplemaking
(5-7)	Ecclesiology
(8)	Missions
(9-10)	Church History
(11-12)	Eschatology
(13)	Spring Review

**Resources**

TITLE/AUTHOR	CHAPTERS
Systematic Theology Grudem	(44-47)
Historical Theology Allison	(26-27)
The Christian Faith Horton	(22, 25-26)
Christian Theology Erickson	(50-53, 55)
Classic Christianity Odom	(III:7-8)

**Additional Web Resource**

Capitol Hill Baptist Church
<a href="http://capitolhillbaptist.org/resources/core-seminars">http://capitolhillbaptist.org/resources/core-seminars</a>