



Learning and Growing to Serve and Lead

Greetings, Lori!

As I was attending my denomination's Annual Conference last week, I was struck by just how many lay people (non-ordained folks who love and follow Jesus) are serving and leading in their churches and communities. Do they all feel well-equipped to serve and lead in the ways that they are?

I'll never forget the time, many years ago, when a woman approached me after church and invited me to be on the nursery committee. "Who, me?" I thought. Was I chosen because I had three kids in tow? In my hesitancy, I felt a little God-nudge encouraging me to give it a try. And we all know how one thing leads to another, which is why you're reading this note from me today.



In my various roles along the way, I had learning and growing to do in order to serve and lead well. A certification in youth ministry gave me the tools and confidence I needed to spend 11 years working with young people and families in my local church. Sunday School teachers, office staff, worship leaders and each person invested in vertical relationship with God and horizontal relationship with others finds saying *YES* easier when they feel well-equipped for the journey.

These certification programs begin in August, with more to come in January 2025.

- Spiritual Gifts (New)
- Worship Leadership (New)
- Grief Care
- Music
- Rural Ministry
- Spiritual Formation
- Young Adult Ministries

Which one might bring the tools and confidence you need to say *YES* to God and *YES* to others as together we build the kin-dom of Christ on earth?

Peace,

P.S. Our office will be closed July 4 and staff working fewer hours July 1 to 5 in order to prioritize self-care and time with family in this holiday week.

New and Featured Courses in July and August



Mental Illness and the Church

August 5 - 16

This course is for clergy and laity who are serving persons with mental health issues. The two-week course will equip learners to engage those who suffer, battle, and overcome this misunderstood condition, destigmatizing the issue without simplifying it. Participants will explore what mental illness is and how it is experienced, will examine the complexity of response to those with mental illness, and will challenge biases toward those with mental illnesses.

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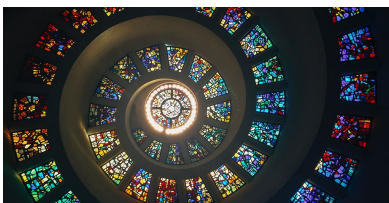
Old Testament Through A Different Lens:

Torah and Beyond

August 5 - 16

Old Testament? Hebrew Bible? TANAKH? What do these three terms have in common? Indeed, do these titles give us any sense of the fact that they refer to the same set of scriptures? Words are important and usually reflect a particular position on something. This two-week study will introduce you to the Old Testament through a different lens, using the works of not only the text by Rabbi Evan Moffic but also writings and interpretations from renowned Jewish scholars, both past and present. Learners will be exposed to Jewish perspectives on the Torah without the requirement of familiarity with Judaism or understanding of Hebrew. With or without formal academic experiences with the scriptures, participants can feel confident of success in the course.

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Creative Praying

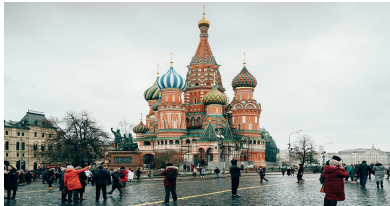
Through Scripture, Music, and Art

August 12 - 23

Do you feel stagnant in your prayer life and long for a more intimate connection with God? By tapping into your creative side—one you may

not even have known existed—you can experience the joy of two-way communication with the original Creator and realize that God is a participant in your prayer life rather than a passive receiver. The two-week course will explore ways to pray using Scripture, music, and art, in your own home and in community with others. We will explore more relaxed, less structured ways to pray, while allowing our creative sides to lead in prayer.

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Russian Philosophy and Theology

August 19 - November 1

Most likely, you have heard of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Beyond these authors, though, exists a complex and rich history of Christian philosophy and theology in the Russian context. This class will expose learners to this tradition of Christian thought. This course will provide tools for thinking through the current war between Russia and Ukraine, as well as helping you gain familiarity with the philosophical and theological thinking of another culture.

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New Certification Courses Beginning in August



Laying a Biblical Foundation

For Young Adult Ministry

August 19 - September 27

IFD Certification in Young Adult Ministry

This course uses the book of Hebrews and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* as the foundational text. Hebrews is written to those who have a background in Godly faith but are struggling because of pressure in their lives. As ministers to emerging adults, it is crucial to take account of what is central to faith and to identify what truly matters. Emerging and young adults thrive in a context of exploration, questions, and full acceptance. For example, the author of Hebrews is speculated but unknown. That unknowing helps place the focus of coursework in a similar stance to that of young adults. The unknown also grounds the learner into asking questions, the acceptance that humans need one another, and the movement away from having all the answers. Instead, focus is on what is important in all things... Jesus.

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Biblical Foundations of Worship

August 19 - September 27



IFD Certification in Worship Leadership

This first course in the Certification in Worship Leadership studies the theology, institutions, and practice of worship in Scripture, exploring the ways in which biblical models inform and inspire worship renewal today. Learners will look at the history and practice of worship in the Old and

New Testaments, including Hebrew roots and the place of the Psalms in the Jewish and Christian traditions. The course will also explore the vocabulary of worship, introduce theological themes, and study various biblical descriptions of worship. This course seeks to provide the biblical tools, knowledge, and resources through which worship may be designed and experienced at a deeper level.

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Teaching Biblical Faith for Spiritual Gifts

August 19 - September 27

IFD Certification in Spiritual Gifts

In this six-week course, learners will dig deeply into epistles that witness to the early church's experience of

their gifts (1 Peter, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians) and into the Gospels as they witness to Jesus' use of spiritual gifts, to find the biblical foundation for understanding and employing spiritual gifts today.

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Microcourses (One Week or Shorter)

In addition to Blackboard interactions, one required Zoom meeting will be held on Monday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. (Central Daylight Time).

The meeting will not be recorded.



Autism and the Church Part 2

July 15 - 19

The autism population is one of the fastest growing populations within the U.S. with one in five individuals being autistic. Their world is often one of isolation and loneliness. God's desire is for all to come to Him, and this class will help begin this process. Learners in this course will be

answering God's calling to minister to a marginalized population and giving hope to a population that needs hope.

[Autism and the Church Microcourse](#)



Declutter, Downsize and Move: A Spiritual Journey About Possessions

July 22 - 26

Young seniors often feel the early effects of aging. Not being as strong or flexible today as they once were is a common warning sign that what was once possible with ease is becoming a struggle. Maintaining a home becomes more difficult, keeping up with meal preparation evolves

into a challenge, and common personal care practices may suffer. A choice needs to be made. Do you move to find help with these things or bring the help in? Sometimes aging in place simply is no longer an option. A move is needed. When you see the handwriting on the wall, you need this course. Take it before you have to move, and you'll be better prepared when the time comes.

Declutter Microcourse



Philippians: Revealing the New Testament

July 29 - August 4

Philippians is not one of the longest books of the Bible, or even of the New Testament, but this short book carries the powerful message of humility, joy, hardship, and hope beyond suffering. This microcourse encourages learners to explore what God's word means to them personally as we

apply what Paul's powerful letter says in our own lives.

Philippians Microcourse



Focusing on the Last Supper

August 19 - 24

The Last Supper is one of the most important events in the life of Christ but it has different meanings to different people, even among the disciples. This class will take a closer look at this monumental event and assist the learner gain a deeper appreciation of Christ's teachings. Learners will finish the

week with an understanding of the importance of the event, a stronger understanding of Scripture, and growth in their personal relationship with Christ.

Last Supper Microcourse

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