

40
YEARS

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY

Liberty Baptist Theological
Seminary & Graduate School

40 Years of Training Champions for Christ
1971 – 2011

June 2011

Dear Pastor/Friend,

The following article tells why Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary is the largest in the world, and why it has such a wide appeal to those studying for ministry. There are 10 qualities today's seminarian looks for in a seminary:

1. Life-Driven
2. Locally-Attached
3. Internet-Connected
4. Electronically-Resourced
5. Person-Related
6. Gender-Friendly
7. Team-Related
8. Indigenously-Utilitarian
9. Curricula-Cafeteria
10. Academically-Accredited

It's a changing world, and Liberty has adapted to changing needs without changing its doctrine or Christian principles.

LIBERTY: TODAY'S SEMINARY PREPARES FOR TOMORROW'S MINISTRY

By
Elmer Towns

How is the theological seminary going to equip students in a fast-paced world . . . a Facebook world . . . a Twitter world . . . a Google world . . . an instant information delivery world? Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary has the largest student enrollment in the world because it recognizes how we live, and delivers quality theological education within the parameters of that context.

And what about today's candidate for ministry? They face the varied pressures of family responsibilities . . . geographical separation from seminary . . . financial pressures . . . time constraints, and limited resources. Again, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary recognizes the needs of its students and has attracted enrollees from students who represent a great number of denominations, Christian organizations, and independent churches.

A seminary can't prepare ministers for the future using yesterday's tools and methods. Seminaries must wisely use today's resources to produce servants of Christ who will meet the challenges of the future. Seminaries must constantly update their procedures, and I am not talking about updating doctrine, nor changing the fundamentals of the faith. These must never change. I'm not talking about altering God's call upon His servants, nor their growth in spiritual relationship to God, nor would we dilute the demands of the Great Commission. Spiritual principles always drive ministerial preparation. Remember the oft quoted muse,

Methods are many,
Principles are few;
Methods may change,
But principles never do.

The 21st century theological seminary is being shaped by the demands and availability of the students who populate its classes. Just as America has become a consumer-driven society where products being offered are sourced by the demands of the customers, so the seminary's location, schedule and curricula are being influenced by those who are being prepared for ministry.

We can no longer think of the seminary as we did in the past when students sat long hours in the library pondering the various research volumes, or sat in lecture halls discussing the theological issues of the scholars, or reinforcing one another in a theological community as like-minded purists who were pursuing education for what some have determined was the past scholarly pulpit.

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF TODAY'S SEMINARIAN

1. Today's ministerial students are life-driven. As they pursue an education, they also pursue vocational jobs to earn money to support their family and provide the necessities of life. They study in their homes or at Starbucks; they use available time, bringing all the resources of their lifestyle into their training. The secret of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary is that it provides the best training to students—where they live, as they live, and within the students' available time.

2. Today's students are locally-attached, yet they have a passion to get the best possible training. Most cannot pack up their belongings to move and attend seminary. The cost of moving to another city and finding temporary housing and employment makes residential training difficult, and in some cases, impossible. Yet the student wants the stability of a library, central classrooms, offices, and access to an identifiable, credible faculty. Liberty Seminary makes it possible for them to be locally-attached, yet allows them to enter into a distance learning program that has residential stability and strength of campus resources.

Local attachment extends around the world. Military personnel are being equipped wherever American troops and personnel are deployed. One Nazarene pastor testified that he finished Liberty Seminary on Air Force Two as a member of the Secret Service, traveling around the world to protect the Secretary of State.

3. Today's students are Internet-connected; they talk with people all over the world and receive messages at the speed of electronic thought from missionaries and people abroad. The last time you dialed an 800 number for service, chances are you talked to someone in India. Therefore, it is only natural that students connect to their seminary by the Internet. After all, the world relates by the Internet, couples meet, fall in love and eventually marry through an Internet dating service; why not experience an Internet theological education?

The computer has become an extension of the Liberty seminarian's life. He thinks on the computer rather than writing his/her thoughts on a sheet of paper. He uses the computer to read the newspaper, textbooks, and even does his banking online. As a matter of fact, many seminarians have their devotions using Scripture they read on a laptop. And even more of them are carrying an iPad2 into the pulpit from which they read on Sunday

morning. With the computer screen available, they can access sermon notes, direct a PowerPoint presentation, and even turn on a film clip to be used as an illustration so that all the audience may apply the lessons from the sermon that is being preached.

Remember, Paul didn't have paper and notebooks available to him when he went into the pulpit. Perhaps he read the text from a papyrus sheet bound in a codex, or even from a vellum scroll. It's likely Paul spoke from memory on many occasions, and even quoted Scripture from the recesses of his mind. The key thing is that Paul related to his people in his culture, according to the standards of his culture, and met the expectations of his culture. Today Liberty's seminarians do the same. They minister in an electronic world, so they must meet the expectations of the electronic generation; they are savvy to electronic tools, and can use them with skill and precision.

4. Today's students are electronically-resourced; they have a library bigger than any minister of the past, right on their laptop or iPhone. It doesn't have to be on a hard drive at home; it can be in a shirt pocket on their Android. Whereas the previous students began to accumulate a library and their scholarship was sometimes measured in lineal feet of significant books in their personal library, today's students subscribe to Logos, read their textbooks on their Kindle, and have their term papers spellchecked, footnoted and printed out via the computer. And what's the new student lounge at the seminary? It's the place where the minister-in-training may access Facebook or Twitter to gather widget feeds for social networking.

Liberty's students don't spend time in the library surrounded by open tomes, nor do they search the dimly lit stacks looking for that one last source; rather, they type a word to search in Google™ and suddenly they have access to more resources than they can use.

5. The new seminarian is person-related. Whereas the former seminarian may have thought of a high-steeple church in a prominent downtown location admired by those in his denomination; the new seminarian thinks of people. They are not as interested in "church growth" or pastoring one of the 100 largest churches in the nation, as they are in the people who make up these churches. They are interested in the things that interest people. These concerns might be issues of immigration, helping multi-nationals adjust to a strange culture; and they most likely have been on a mission trip to help provide clean water to a native village, or they've been involved in building a house for inhabitants in the slums of their own city, or they've been involved in 101 other humanitarian projects.

Their dream probably involves preaching the gospel in some native village or working in an inner-city shelter; it's involvement with people near and far, those who are different in culture but have needs with which the seminarian identifies. The past courses in missiology studied out of a textbook will not equip them for ministry. The Liberty seminarians do not go looking for ministry; they become ministry when they are with the people to whom God calls, located where God leads.

The strength of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary is its commitment to, and past strengths in soul winning, evangelism, and church planting. It communicates passion to reach people for Jesus Christ, then identifies them with a local church, and instructs them in the Word of God, so they grow to maturity.

6. The new seminarian might just as well be a woman, as a man. Today's seminary must be gender-friendly. Those wanting training for ministry are no longer just men; as a matter of fact, there are about as many women enrolled in theological seminaries as there are men. Whether on the mission field, military chaplaincy, director of women's ministries in a local church, or counseling in a Christian organization; women are being called of God and used by Him. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary is ready to prepare all students for all types of ministry, so that they will be qualified in many areas of life. However, to be gender-friendly is not the same as some translated scriptures in a gender-neutral way. To be gender-friendly is to be as people friendly as

God and the Bible.

7. Another quality of today's candidate and modern minister is they are team-related. In residential courses, students are grouped in small discussion clusters for learning and interaction. Today's professor does less lecturing and students interact more for understanding and application. For online seminary classes, there are chat rooms and discussion boards to examine answers to questions. Liberty's online class becomes a cohort where a team is built for an 8-week session, just as the student will do with followers when they become leaders.

The modern seminarian perceives his talents differently and doesn't think of himself as a self-made person, nor considers he has achieved success or recognition in isolation. Whereas in previous generations, our heroes were the Lone Ranger who fought off evil, rode a thundering horse named "Silver," or perhaps our hero was a man super enough to leap buildings in a single bound, more powerful than a rushing locomotive, and could outrun a speeding bullet. Today's seminarian ministers off the strengths of others in their team.

In a past generation pastors thought of themselves as isolated-individuals who evangelized neighborhood, or built mega churches, or were John Wayne, who "won WWII single handedly." They believed that the average person against insurmountable odds, in difficult circumstances, and unbelievable obstacles could win the victory when God was on their side. But today's minister wants to be part of a team, and sees their spiritual giftedness as contributing to a team for church planting, counseling, or mentoring. After all, isn't the church a community?

8. Today's seminarians are indigenously-utilitarian. In previous days, the seminarian attended classes with a tie, suit and dress shoes; and perhaps carried his books in an attaché case or chic leather briefcase. However, today's seminarian might wear a baseball cap and T-shirt supporting the Chicago Cubs as they study online. They might carry their books in a backpack. And then too, one student in a residential homiletics class might be attired in a business suit for presentations, while the next preacher has spiked hair, shirt tail out, blue jeans, and flip-flops.

9. In previous days, a seminary's curriculum resembled a "blue plate special." Today, it's a curricula-cafeteria. With the "blue plate special" every meal served the same amount of food, of the same spread of food, with the same preparation, the same flavoring and the same price. But today's seminary must be a cafeteria that considers the unique tastes, background, needs, and desires of each seminarian. One size doesn't fit all; one meal doesn't satisfy all.

The new seminarian is not interested in learning curricula that comes from denominational headquarters, or past programs that once challenged generations. Rather, the seminarians need freedom to pick courses and curricula that will prepare them for their unique ministry that will equip their unique spiritual gifts.

10. Finally, the modern seminary must be academically-accredited giving its students and graduates credibility for the education for which they have invested finances and time. They want an education that is accepted by churches, denominations, their peers and the broad body of evangelicals in general. Therefore, they will attend a seminary that has met the standards of regional and professional accrediting bodies that in turn are recognized by the American government. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary is accredited by SACS, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

THE LIBERTY DIFFERENCE

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary is the largest in the world because of its conservative doctrinal position, its sound grounding on Bible teaching, and reflection of core Christian essentials. The same can be said of its commitment to biblical lifestyle. It does not endorse extreme legalism on the right, nor obviously compromise

sinful practices on the opposite left.

Liberty believes the Great Commission guides all its ministerial classes, whether it's making disciples of all Jesus taught us to do, or communicates methods of how to reach people.

Therefore, Liberty is committed to changing the entire world for Jesus Christ; first changing the world within its students, then equipping them to change the world around them. Finally, giving them a dream of being significant enough to change the entire world.

WHY LIBERTY IS LARGE?

Liberty was one of the first theological seminary to offer accredited, online education to its students. Liberty Seminary grew because it was grounded in an accredited residential program, with fully qualified academic professors.

Liberty Seminary is among the least expensive seminaries in America. Residential costs are \$1,900 for a full course load, and online costs are \$2,200 per semester. Liberty has 834 residential students in Lynchburg, Va., and 8,462 students online. These represent 7,002 males and 2,210 females. From these students, 1,024 are preparing for chaplaincy ministry in the U.S. military. At the present time, Liberty has more chaplains serving in the U.S. military than any other equipping seminary.

Liberty students represent 46 countries of the world, and 24 denominations. It offers classes in English, Korean, and Spanish.

PROGRAM STATS

Liberty's students registered in the following programs: Ph.D. 40; D.Min. 303; Th.M. 118; M.Div. 3,341; M.A.R. 1,795; Master of Religious Education 30; Professional Master of Arts 3,099; Research Master of Arts (thesis) 29.

Some of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary's distinguished graduates are Dr. Tom Mullins, founder and pastor of Christ Fellowship, Palm Beach Gardens, Fl., attendance 24,000 in resident and online; Jonathan Falwell, pastor, Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va., attendance 14,000; and Young Sun Park, founder and pastor, Lampo Church (Presbyterian), Seoul, South Korea, attendance 30,000.

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary has 29 residential faculty, each one with an earned accredited doctorate in the area of their discipline. Collectively, they have written over 133 books.

There are 248 adjunct faculty who supervise the 8,462 students in online program. Many online faculty are professors/teachers at other accredited seminaries, including denominational, interdenominational, and independent seminaries. Other online faculty are pastors, denominational leaders, missionary leaders, and church staff personnel.

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