

*Theological Issues for Ministry in the 21st Century:
Providence, Prayer, and Proclamation*

THTH 8301

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New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Spring 2005*

Seminary Mission Statement

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

Course Description

This seminar involves conversation and reflection on various dimensions of Christian ministry from a theological perspective. A twin-pronged focus examines contemporary theological issues in the broader faith community and issues related to the specific places of ministry served by students enrolled in the seminar.

In this survey of Christian thought on Providence and Prayer, students will examine theological, biblical, and philosophical teachings to form a sound doctrinal foundation on the topics of providence and prayer. The class will include discussion of related issues such as the attributes of God, the problem of evil, and the use of prayer in pastoral ministry.

Addresses for Correspondence

You may contact Dr. Steve Lemke through the following:

Office: Provost's office, upstairs in Frost Building

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Fax: 504-816-8428

Texts

Tiessen, Terrance. *Providence and Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* Downers Grove: InverVarsity, 2000.

Carson, D. A. *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.

Lemke, Steve. *Miracles and the Providence of God.* New Orleans: NOBTS, 2002.

Course Objectives and Core Competencies Addressed

As part of the larger Seminary goal of equipping effective leaders of healthy churches, and addressing the key competencies of Biblical Exposition, Christian Theological Heritage, and Spiritual and Character Formation in the Seminary’s curriculum, the objectives of this course are for the successful student:

- to achieve a greater understanding of the biblical, theological, and philosophical foundation for the doctrines of providence and prayer.
- to be able to identify and discuss the key thinkers and models regarding providence and prayer.
- to apply sound hermeneutics to interpret key biblical passages regarding providence and prayer.
- to achieve greater understanding of the theological and philosophical issues regarding miracles.
- to be able to apply appropriately the doctrine of providence in prayer and pastoral ministry.

Class Assignments

Suffering Text Reflections – Read carefully the D. A. Carson text, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, and be prepared in particular to discuss the following “Questions for Further Study,” which are at the end of each chapter in the book.

Due: 1/21

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Questions	3,4	1, 5, 6	4, 5	3,5	1, 2	3,4	5	1,2,7	1	4	1,2	1	1

Tiessen Providence Text Notes and, 100 points. **Due: 1/20**

Summarize each of the eleven models that Terrance Tiessen outlines in *Providence and Prayer*, one page for each model. You may utilize the chart in the Appendix as a starting point, filling in more details about each view, and adding other categories (such as listing advocates of each view). Write out full paragraph descriptions of the various positions, not just phrases or word summaries.

Tiessen Text Class Presentation, 50 points. **Due: 1/20**

Each class member will present one of the Tiessen chapters (a model of providence and prayer) in class at the time noted in the Class Schedule. After registration, email Dr. Lemke to request your 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices of which model of providence in Tiessen you will present. Present the model (chapter) to the class *from the perspective of a representative of that model*. Bring at least a one page single spaced summary of the position to share with all the class. Be sure to include (a) the view of God, (b) the view of time and eternity, (c) the view of the problem of evil, (d) the view of divine providence, and (e) the view of prayer endorsed by the model you are presenting.

Book Critiques and Class Presentation, 100 points. **Due: 2/17**

Choose *one* of the following two options.

(a) Read *three* of the following four popular books on the topic of providence and evil. Write a critique of approximately 4-6 pages on each book, identifying what insights you gained from the book, and what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

- Claypool, John. *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler: How to Handle Grief*. Waco: Word, 1974.
- Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Macmillan, 1977.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Yancey, Philip. *Where Is God When It Hurts?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977.

or, (b) Read *one* of the following seven books focused on one of our class topics.

Summarize the contents of the book utilizing a basic outline format (not necessarily a formal outline with the various official levels; a bulleted list would be sufficient).

Summarize the content of each chapter – about 1-2 pages typed single spaced for each chapter. The point of the notes is to be a helpful resource for you, so in addition to the outline summary, jot down quotes or whatever material you want for future reference. Then write a 2-3 page critique of the book, identifying what insights you gained from the book, and what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

- Brown, Colin. *Miracles and the Critical Mind*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Basinger, David and Randall, eds. *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* by John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach, and Clark Pinnock. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986.
- Beker, J. Christiaan. *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Berkouwer, G. C. *The Providence of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952.
- Craig, William Lane. *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.
- Davis, Stephen L., ed. *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973.
- Erickson, Millard J. *God the Father Almighty: A Contemporary Exploration of the Divine Attributes*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Helm, Paul. *The Providence of God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994.

Book Critiques Class Presentation, 50 points.

Each class member will present a book critique in class at the time noted in the Class Schedule. After registration, email Dr. Lemke to request your 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices of which of the book options you will present. Bring a one page single spaced summary of your comments to share with all the class at the time noted in the Class Schedule.

Position Paper, 100 points. **Due: 3/1**

Defend which of the models Tiessen describes (or a hybrid that you propose) that you actually affirm. Use Scripture and draw from all the various resources identified in the course to defend your position. Give reasons why you believe that your position is superior to each of the other positions. Include how you would pray about the case study described in Tiessen. Your paper should be about 8-10 pages single spaced.

Extra Credit for Participation in the Blackboard Discussion

You may begin participating in a class discussion through NOBTS Blackboard, beginning December 1, 2005. To sign up for blackboard, take the following steps: Open your web browser to the NOBTS home page, <http://www.nobts.edu> Click on the **Blackboard** link in the left column. Choose the **Create Account** button on the left, enter in your information, then click **Submit**. Confirm your registration by clicking **OK**. Your personal NOBTS Blackboard home page should now appear. To enroll in a class, click on the **Courses** tab at the top of the page. Click the **Browse Course Catalog** link on the right-hand side of the page. Scroll down the page and click on the **Enroll** button beside Providence and Prayer. Enter the **enrollment code**: THTH8301 (Note: the enrollment code is case sensitive, so type it in exactly this way). Click **OK** when the confirmation page appears.

Course Policies

Participation in Class with preparation and attentiveness are crucial not only to your own success in the class, but to those who sit around you. Each student has a positive contribution to make to the class. It is essential that we treat each other with Christian charity and kindness.

Absences are not allowed without special permission in this reduced time format course. Three times tardy or leaving early from class sessions equals one absence.

Grades will be determined on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale—
an A for 93-100, B for 85-92, C for 77-84, D for 70-76, and F for 69 or below.

Late Work will be penalized. No assignment will be accepted that is over two weeks late, and all late work will be assessed a proportional penalty (two points per office day).

Class Schedule

Models of Providence and Prayer			
Time	Class Discussion Topic	Reading Assignment	Presenter
1/20 1:00-2:15 pm	Introduction to the Class		Dr. Lemke Dr. Tolbert
2:30-3:45 pm	Overview of Providence and the Nature of God		Dr. Lemke
4:00-5:15 pm	Providence and Prayer in Deism and Fatalism	Tiessen, chapters 2, 12	
5:15-6:15 pm	Supper break		
6:15-7:30 pm	Providence and Prayer in Process Theology and Openness of God Theology	Tiessen, chapters 3-5	
7:45-8:45 pm	Providence and Prayer in Church Dominion and Redemptive Intervention	Tiessen, chapters 6-7	
1/21 8:00-9:15 am	Providence and Prayer in Molinism and Middle Knowledge Calvinism	Tiessen, chapters 8, 13-14	
9:30-11:00 am	Providence and Prayer in Thomism and Barthianism	Tiessen, chapters 9-10	
11:00-12:15	Lunch break		
12:15-1:30 pm	Providence and Prayer in Calvinism	Tiessen, chapter 11	
1:45-3:00 pm	Applying Providence and Prayer in Ministry and Proclamation		Dr. Tolbert

Providence and the Problem of Evil

Date	Class Discussion Topic	Reading Assignment	Presenter
2/17 1:00—2:15	Providence and the Problem of Evil Discussion of the Carson text	Carson, chapters 3-10	Dr. Tolbert and the class
2:30-3:45 pm	Providence and the Problem of Evil Claypool book critique Lewis book critique	Carson, chapters 3-10	Dr. Tolbert and the class
4:00-5:15 pm	Providence and the Problem of Evil Wolterstorff book critique Yancey book critique		
5:15-6:15 pm	Supper break		
6:15-7:30	Providence and the Problem of Evil Beker book critique Davis book critique		
7:45-8:45	Prayer, Proclamation, and Ministry when Confronting the Problem of Evil Summary class discussion		Dr. Tolbert and the class

Providence and the Nature of God

Date	Class Discussion Topic	Reading Assignment	Presenter
2/18 8:00-9:15 am	God and Time: Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnitemporality Bassingers book critique	Carson, chapters 1-2	
9:30-11:00 am	God and Time: Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnitemporality Craig book critique Erickson book critique	Carson, chapters 1-2	
11:00-12:15	Lunch break		
12:15-1:30	God's Omnibenevolence, Impassibility, and Immutability Berkouwer book critique Helm book critique	Carson, chapters 11- 13	
1:45-3:00	God and Providential Care: Miracles Brown book critique		
3:15-4:30	God and Providential Care Summary class discussion		Dr. Lemke Dr. Tolbert and the class

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- _____. *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991.
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Providence and the Attributes of God

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Providence and Miracles

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