

Reformed Theological Seminary—Orlando, FL
Abuse and the Church—02PT6530
Summer 2023

Instructor: Justin S. Holcomb

E-mail: jholcomb@rts.edu

Schedule: July 7 (3-9pm) and July 8 (8am-5pm)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- This course explores how to prevent, recognize, and respond to sexual and domestic abuse. Specifically, it will focus on how to minister to those who are survivors of abuse, how to respond to perpetrators of abuse, how to respond in a crisis, and how to build a healthy church culture before there is a particular crisis.
- This course will be a study of various forms of violence and abuse and the theological and practical implications of the Gospel for these topics. We will investigate sexual assault and domestic violence to better understand each issue as well as the prevalence of the issue and effects on survivors. We will explore the how the Gospel offers help, hope, and healing to survivors. This course will focus on theological engagement and practical engagement.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- For the student to understand the numerous dimensions of sexual assault and domestic abuse.
- For students to be aware of the scope of the problems of sexual assault and domestic violence and to be aware of the prevalence and effects for survivors.
- For the student to be able to formulate a theology of violence and abuse.
- For students to understand how the theological subjects of the Gospel lay a foundation for how biblical themes affect how we view violence and abuse.
- For students to be able to relate major themes of Christian theology to violence and abuse.
- For students to be able to articulate how Gospel-based hope and healing relates to violence and abuse.
- For students to know how individuals and the church can respond practically with help and survivor advocacy.
- For students to learn about the experiences of and responses to sexual, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse.

ASSIGNMENTS

- 1. Required Reading:** Read all the following works and signify that you have done so by submitting a document on Canvas assignment page stating what percentage of the required reading you have completed. Due 3:00pm EST on July 7, 2023.

- Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault*, Crossway (288 pages).
- Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Is It My Fault?: Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence*, Moody Publishing (240 pages).
- Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Children and Trauma: Equipping Parents and Caregivers*, New Growth Press.
- Justin S. Holcomb, "The Need for a Second Adam," *Modern Reformation*, March/April 2017.
- Justin S. Holcomb, "Violence in the Home: How Pastors Can Help Victims of Domestic Abuse," *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2015.
- Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, "After Domestic Violence, Why Should a Christian Wife Call the Police, Not a Pastor, First? To Stop the Abuse Cycle" *Christianity Today*, February 2015.
- Justin S. Holcomb, "The Difference Between Shame and Guilt" *Modern Reformation*, March/April 2017.

* Please see end of this syllabus for a bibliography of other recommended readings.

- 2. Reflection Paper:** Write a 2,500-word paper focusing on domestic abuse, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, or another form of abuse and how a particular biblical or theological theme (sin, image Dei, creation, doctrine of God, Christology, eschatology, etc.) relates to that particular violence and abuse. Due: 11:00am EST, August 11, 2023.

All written assignments should be submitted in either Word or PDF format. Assignments should be double-spaced with 1" margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman, 12-point type. Assignments must be submitted electronically.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING/GRADING

Reading	20%
Paper	80%

GRADING SCALE

The paper grade will determine your final course grade.

A (97-100), A- (94-96), B+ (91-93), B (88-90), B- (86-87), C+ (83-85), C (80-82), C- (78-79), D+ (75-77), D (72-74), D- (70-71), F (below 70)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Class attendance and participation are a central part of this course. If you should miss a class, you are expected to contact another student regarding the information covered.

Late papers will be graded down 33% for each 24 hours late.

All written assignments should be submitted in either Word or PDF format. Assignments should be double spaced with 1" margins on all sides of each page, and should be printed in Times New Roman 12-point type. Assignments must be submitted electronically.

Do not submit a paper that you submitted for another course. This will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Recommended Books

- Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *God Made All of Me: Helping Children Protect Their Bodies*
- Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *God Made Me In His Image: Helping Children Appreciate Their Bodies*
- Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *God Made Babies: Helping Parents Answer the Baby Question*
- Justin S. Holcomb and Basyle Tchividjian, *Caring for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*, New Growth Press (15 pages)
- Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovits, *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries*, New Growth Press (320 pages).
- Victor L. Vieth, *On This Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse on the Life and Words of Jesus*

- Brad Hambrick, ed., *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*
- Todd Bordow, *What Did Jesus Really Say About Divorce?: An Alternative Interpretation of Matthew 5:31 and 32 and Its Implications for Counseling Troubled Marriages in the Church*
- Wade Mullen, *Something's Not Right: Decoding the Hidden Tactics of Abuse and Freeing Yourself From its Power*
- Michael Kreuger, *Bully Pulpit: Confronting the Problem of Spiritual Abuse in the Church*

Recommended Articles or Chapters

- Justin S. Holcomb, "The Ethics of Personhood," *Tabletalk Magazine*, April 2013.
- Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, "Does the Bible Say Women Should Suffer Abuse and Violence?" *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 28:2 (2014): 9-21.
- Lindsey A. Holcomb, "The Church and Women at Risk," *ESV Women's Study Bible*, pp. 1617-1619.
- Jacob and Rachael Denhollander, "Justice: The Foundation of a Christian Approach to Abuse," Paper presented by Rachael Denhollander at the 70th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society
- "The Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study"
- R. Scott Clark, "A Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Abuse"
- Michael Kruger, "What is Spiritual Abuse?"
- Victor I. Vieth, "What Would Walther Do? Applying Law and Gospel to Victims and Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse," *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 2012, Vol. 40, No. 4, 257-273.
- Victor L. Vieth, "Child Abuse and the Lutheran Confessional: A Call to Elevate Christ's Teaching on Children above Church Traditions," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 46:3 (July 2019)
- Shira M. Berkovitz, "Institutional Abuse in the Jewish Community," *Traditions* 50:2, 2017, pp. 11-49
- Shira M. Berkovitz, "Preventing Abuse in Christian Organizations That Serve Youth: Ten Policies to Create Safer Environments," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45:3 (July 2018)

- Jouriles, E. N., Rancher, C., Mahoney, A., Kurth, C., Cook, K., & McDonald, R., “Divine Spiritual Struggles and Psychological Adjustment Among Adolescents Who Have Been Sexually Abused,” *Psychology of Violence*. December 19, 2019. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/vio0000274>
- Vieth, Victor I. and Singer, Pete (2019) "Wounded Souls: The Need for Child Protection Professionals and Faith Leaders to Recognize and Respond to the Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse," *Mitchell Hamline Law Review*: Vol. 45: Issue 4, Article 6.
- Victor I. Vieth, Mark D. Everson, Suzanna Tiapula, “Chaplains for Children: Twelve Potential Roles for a Theologian on the Multi-Disciplinary Team”
- Amy Russell, “The Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse and Exploitation: What Research Tells Us,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45:3 (July 2018)
- Lauren E. Maltby and Todd W. Hall, “Trauma, Attachment, and Spirituality: A Case Study,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 2012, Vol. 40, No. 4, 302-312
- Jana Pressley and Joseph Spinazzola, “Beyond Survival: Application of a Complex Trauma Treatment Model in the Christian Context,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 2015, Vol. 43, No. 1, 8–22
- Vieth, Victor, Mark D. Everson, Viola Vaughan-Eden, Suzanna Tiapula, Shauna Galloway-Williams, and Reverend Carrie Nettles, “Keeping Faith: The Potential Role of a Chaplain to Address the Spiritual Needs of Maltreated Children and Advise Child Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Teams,” *Liberty University Law Review*: Vol. 14: Issue 2, Article 5.
- *Currents in Theology and Mission* (45:3, July 2018): The articles for this issue follow the theme “Child Abuse and the Church: Prevention, Pastoral Care, and Healing”
- Herman Ridderbos, “The Structure of Paul’s Theology” in *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Eerdmans, 1997) (provided electronically)
- Anthony Hoekema, “The Nature of Sin” and “The Restraint of Sin” in *Created in God’s Image*
- Gerald Bray, “Sin in Historical Theology” in *Fallen: A Theology of Sin*, edited by Christopher Morgan and Robert Peterson
- John Mahony, “A Theology of Sin for Today,” in *Fallen: A Theology of Sin*, edited by Christopher Morgan and Robert Peterson
- R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead, “Introduction: Contextualizing Human Dignity,” in *God and Human Dignity*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead
- Christoph Schwöbel, “Recovering Human Dignity,” in *God and Human Dignity*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead

- H. Russel Botman, “Covenantal Anthropology: Three Discourses of Human Dignity,” in *God and Human Dignity*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead
- Fraser Watts, “Human Dignity: Concepts and Experiences,” in *God and Human Dignity*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Is There Justice in the Trinity,” in *God’s Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Abuse and the Church

Professor: Justin Holcomb

Campus: Orlando

Date: July 5-6, 2019

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<u>Rubric</u> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Course requires application of theology to abuse and violence.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Course requires understanding sin, violence, hope, and healing from scripture.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Course explores and applies Reformed theology broadly, but not the Westminster Standards specifically.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Course will influence how students honor God by caring for image bearers.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Course is focused on confirming church and church to Word of God regarding abuse.
Winsomely	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos.	Strong	Course focuses on hope and

Reformed	(Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)		healing from abuse to all.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Course will influence preaching and teaching, but is not focus
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	None	
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Strong	Course will focus on the need for wise, biblical shepherding
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Course is focused on confirming church and church to Word of God regarding abuse.