

Classics of Personal Devotions

Spring 2026

(1 Hour Course: 3 1/4 hrs x 4 Weeks)

Syllabus

Instructor

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Contact Information

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Course Description

Devotional practices serve to help keep us healthy and active as God's people for His glory, our joy, and the life of the world. This course will examine various devotional practices and historical resources for the purpose of cultivating a practical plan to continue growing in your love for God and your neighbor as you discover how deeply you are loved in Christ.

Meeting Dates (IMPORTANT NOTE: Class attendance is CRITICAL given the interactive nature of the class and will affect your class grade if you miss.)

Tuesday, 9 am-12:15 pm, February 17th, March 10th, March 31st, and April 21st

Learning Objectives (*See Course Objectives*)

1. To provide an understanding of and experience in devotional practices as practiced historically for God's glory, the beloved's joy, and the life of the world. This will be evidenced in the Reflection Questions completed, class discussion, Personal Prayers from Scripture, and by completing the Final Reflection Paper with Long-Term Plan for Daily, Weekly, and Seasonal Personal Devotions.
2. To be exposed to a variety of genres and classic resources and learn how to use them for personal devotional practices as reflected in the Reflection Questions completed, class discussion, class presentation of a particular classic work, and by completing the Final Reflection Paper.
3. To learn how to read devotionally with discernment as displayed in Reflection Questions completed, class discussion, class presentation of a particular classic work, and by completing the Final Reflection Paper.
4. To learn how to pray the Bible as displayed in Personal Prayers from Scripture and prayer in class.

Required Texts: (IMPORTANT NOTE: You will NEED to purchase your own books as opposed to using library copies given the nature of the assignments.)

-Edmund P. Clowney, *Christian Meditation* (Regent College Publishing, 1979),
ISBN-13: 978-1573832278

-To be completed by Monday, Feb. 16th

-John Owen, *Communion with God* (Banner of Truth Trust, 2022),
ISBN-13: 978-1800402724

-To be read devotionally on the Lord's Day Sabbath beginning March 2nd. You will pick 1 out of the chapters per Sunday to read and reflect on per the schedule in the Class Notebook.

-John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer* (Scribner, Reissue, 2014),
ISBN-13: 978-1476754703

-To be practiced daily beginning Sunday, March 1st through Monday, March 30th. You will be split into Morning and Evening Groups on the first day of class.

-Derek Kidner, *The Message of Ecclesiastes* (IVP Academic, 1984),
ISBN-13: 978-0877842866

-To be read devotionally along with Ecclesiastes per the schedule in the Class Notebook.

-ESV Scripture Journal: Ecclesiastes (Crossway, 2019),
ISBN-13: 978-143356518

-Class Notebook with Various Articles and Resources for Class: To be provided on the first day of class

Classics of Personal Devotion to Choose from for the Class Presentation (IMPORTANT NOTE: This list is subject to change. Your book will be picked in the first class, so WAIT to purchase anything from this list.):

-John Calvin, *A Little Book on the Christian Life* (Ligonier Ministries, 2017)
ISBN-13: 978-1567698169

-John Flavel, *Keeping the Heart* (Christian Heritage, 2012),
ISBN-13: 978-1845506483

-Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997)
ISBN-13: 978-0802843456

-Lemuel Haynes, *May We Meet in the Heavenly World*, ed. by Thabiti M. Anyabwile (Reformation Heritage Books, 2009)
ISBN-13: 978-1601780656

-Koyama Kosuke, *Three Mile an Hour God* (Scm Pr, 2021),
ISBN-13: 978-0334061472

-Eugene H. Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer* (HarperOne, 1991)
ISBN-13: 978-0060665128

-Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (Christian Heritage, 2012)
ISBN-13: 978-1781911075

-Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed* (Evangelism Press, 2021)
ISBN-13: 979-8705834587

-Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Banner of Truth, 2022)
ISBN-13: 978-1800402751

Assessment

-Personal Devotions Questionnaire: (See the attached): 5%

-Required: Complete the Personal Devotions Questionnaire

-Due: Posted in Canvas by 11:59 pm, Monday, February 16th

-Short Essays on Devotional Reading and Hearing God: 5%

-Required: 1 page or less on each question:

1. How is devotional reading different from informational and recreational reading?
2. What are the various ways available to us to hear from God?

-Due: Posted in Canvas by 11:59 pm, Monday, February 16th

-Reflection Questions for Each Reading and Practice (See attached Reflection Questions Template): 25%

-Required: Complete Reflection Questions for each of the readings per the Class Schedule

-Due: Posted in Canvas by 11:59 pm the Monday prior to the class in which its due (*See the Class Schedule*)

-Personal Prayers from Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Ephesians 3:14-21: 5%

-Required: Write a personal prayer from the assigned passage that moves beyond mere paraphrase and restatement.

-Due: Posted in Canvas by 11:59 pm the Monday prior to the class in which it's due (*See the Class Schedule*)

-Class Presentation of a Classic of Personal Devotion: 20%

-Required: 1 Page Synopsis with suggested devotional use(s) for other students; a 10 minute in class presentation concerning your experience with the work and suggested devotional use(s).

-Due: Posted in Canvas by 11:59 pm, Monday, April 20th

-Final Reflection Paper with Long Term Plan for Daily, Weekly and Seasonal Personal Devotions: 40%

-Topic: Reflect on how the class helped you to grow in reference to the above Learning Objectives and detail a plan for your personal devotions daily, weekly, and seasonally with a plan for how to mature your practices in the future.

-Required: Minimum of 10 pages in length; 12 point Times New Roman; 1.5 spaced

-Due: Posted in Canvas by 11:59 pm, Friday, May 8th

Zoom Policy

Your professor may allow you to Zoom into class or watch Zoom recordings for excused absences based on the professor's discretion and subject to the availability of equipment. Students should contact their professor well in advance of the class meeting. For a third absence the Registrar should be consulted. Your professor may require additional interactive assignments to offset the absence of classroom interaction. Sync or Remote Live courses have priority for the limited Zoom equipment.

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class. Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed. Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Registrar's Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 46 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 18) Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 49)

Classics of Personal Devotions Class Schedule

Class Date	Class Schedule	Associated Passages	Required Reading	Assignments Due
Feb 17th: 1	Introductions and Prayer			
	Class Review and Expectations	<i>Psalm 1</i>		Personal Devotions Questionnaire
2	How to Read Devotionally	<i>Proverbs 1:1-7</i>		1 page or less Essay on Devotional Reading
3	How to Hear God	<i>Ephesians 3:14-21</i>		1 page or less Essay on Hearing God
	Christian Meditation		Edmund Clowney's <i>Christian Meditation</i>	Reflection Questions from Clowney
March 10th: 1	Prayers for Personal Devotions	<i>Habakkuk 3</i>	3 out of 5 Prayers in the Notebook	Personal Prayer from Assigned Psalm; Reflection Questions from Prayers for Personal Devotion
2	Sermons for Personal Devotions	<i>Hebrews 2</i>	2 out of 5 Sermons from the Notebook	Reflection Questions for Sermons
3	Hymns and Poetry for Personal Devotions	<i>Exodus 15:1-18</i>	2 out of 5 Hymns and 2 out of 5 Poems in the Notebook	Reflections Questions from Hymns; Reflection Questions for Poetry
				Reflection Questions for Owen, Chap 1-6
March 31st: 1	Commentaries for Personal Devotions	<i>Luke 24:13-35</i>	Derek Kidner's <i>The Message of Ecclesiastes</i>	Reflection Questions from Reading Kidner and Ecclesiastes
				Personal Prayer from Ecclesiastes
2	Letters for Personal Devotions	<i>Philemon</i>	3 out of 5 Letters	Reflection Questions for Letters
3	Confessions for Personal Devotions	<i>Philippians 3:12-21</i>	John Baillie's <i>A Diary of Private Prayer</i>	Reflection Questions for Baillie
				Reflection Questions for Owen, Chap 7-15
April 21st: 1	Spiritual Classics for Personal Devotions	<i>Psalm 51</i>	John Owen's <i>Communion with God</i>	Personal Prayer from Ephesians 3:14-21; Reflection Questions for Owen, Chap 16-24; Reflection Questions for the Heidelberg Catechism
2	Presentations of Spiritual Classics for Personal Devotion			1 Page Handout for Other Students; Reflection Paper on Your Classic
3	Concluding Reflections			

May 8 11:59 pm

**Final Reflection
Paper; Long Term
Plan for Personal
Devotions**

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Classics of Personal Devotions

Professor: Cameron Barham

Campus: Atlanta

Date: Spring 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<p><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></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Informal class discussion. 2. Reflection questions for each of the readings. 3. Written prayers from Scripture. 4. Class presentation of a spiritual classic. 5. Reflection paper with long term plan for personal devotions.
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.)	Moderate / Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scripture will be used for each class to illustrate various devotional genres and practices. 2. Students will learn to pray the Bible. 3. Students will study Ecclesiastes along with a commentary to learn to read Scripture devotionally.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The devotional works of Reformed Christians will feature prominently. 2. The Westminster Standards will be used for the discussion of the use of confessions for devotional purposes.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflection questions for the chapters focus on spiritual formation and application. 2. Class discussion will seek to apply the material to all of life.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The course will focus on personal devotional practices that help form students further into the image of Christ to love God and love neighbor as they have been loved. 2. The development of a long-term plan for personal devotions.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (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.)	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Various quotes and examples used in class will come from a broader range of sources to help cultivate a charitable perspective. 2. Humility will be emphasized and discussed as a key goal for personal devotions.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some practical discussion of how personal devotions aid pastoral ministry. 2. Some practical discussion of how personal devotions impact preaching.

			3. Strong emphasis on character over competence as formed by personal devotions
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Classics of Personal Devotions

Devotional Practices Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to establish a baseline for your current devotional practices and to help me have some idea of where you are to tailor our class time to where the class is as a whole. You may not have answers to some of the questions. You're not being graded (or judged) based on your answers.

1. Describe your current devotional practices including time of day, general length of time, resources used, and spiritual disciplines practiced for the following (You may not have practices for some of these categories; if so, mark N/A):
 - a. Daily:
 - b. Weekly:
 - c. Lord's Day Sabbath:
 - d. Monthly:
 - e. Seasonally (Include the Specific Season such as Advent, Lent, Easter, etc.):
 - f. Annually:
2. What are the biggest challenges you face in your devotional practices and spiritual disciplines?
3. What helps you to be present and focused during your devotional time?
4. What role does technology play in your devotional practices and spiritual practices?
5. How have your devotional practices and spiritual disciplines changed since starting seminary?
6. How have your devotional practices matured over the years of your Christian life?

7. Which of the 10 books listed on the Syllabus to choose from for the class presentation have you read?
8. Who and/or what has most influenced and shaped your devotional practices (include 3-5 resources that have you most benefitted from in your devotional life)?
9. What genres of devotional material (letters, hymns, biographies/memoirs, prayers, commentaries, theology, poetry, etc.) have you used?
10. How does your devotional reading differ from other types of reading (pleasure, preparation, seminary, etc.)?
11. What devotional practices and spiritual disciplines would you like to use regularly that you haven't been able to implement yet?
12. What do you hope your devotional life will look like after seminary?

