

**MB Biblical Seminary**  
**Integrated Studies**  
**Church & God's Mission in the World, IS 525 (3 units)**  
**Syllabus, Spring 2006**

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Time: Tuesdays, 1:30 – 4:30 Jan. 10 – Apr. 18, except Mar. 7 (modular week)

Location: Manitoba Room

Instructors: Tim Geddert, Ph.D. & Raymond Bystrom, D.Min.

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Office Hours: By appointment

### **Course Description**

This course explores the biblical theme of God's reign as the key message announced by Jesus in his person and work. It also integrates the theme of God's reign in Jesus with an understanding of the mission of the Triune God in all of creation as carried out through the church in the power of the Spirit. A general framework for understanding a missiological ecclesiology will be developed and then applied to the North American cultural setting.

### **Course Objectives**

IS 525 seeks to understand the church's vocation in light of God's mission in the world, especially God's mission in the person of Jesus Christ. As students, you will experience the following outcomes:

1. You will gain an appreciation for the central themes in Scripture that foster an understanding of the nature & purpose of the church;
2. You will discover how the work of God in the Old Testament sets the stage for understanding the New Testament church;
3. You will learn how the church's self-understanding in the 1st century contributes to our understanding of its nature and purpose in the 21st century;
4. You will acquire a better understanding of the cultural context & denominational nature of the church in North America;
5. You will develop a capacity to critique contemporary ecclesiologies by assessing their faithfulness to the Gospel and their relevance to the cultural context;
6. You will explore ways of cultivating missional communities that bring the Gospel into engagement with a broken world; and
7. You will learn to recognize churches that are vital faith communities, exhibiting God's strength in weakness rather than living and acting as fallen powers, captive to the principalities and powers of this world.

## Degree Related Objectives

Within the larger goals of the seminary degree programs, IS 525 seeks to address the following outcomes:

1. Knowledge of the nature & character of God's mission and the nature and purpose of the church in the world, the denominational nature of the church in its NA setting, the key characteristics of modern/post-modern North American culture, the shape of church leadership in a missional setting, and the institutional structures that best facilitate the church's mission in NA.
2. Appreciation of the critical importance of faithfulness to the gospel, especially at the level of church leadership, the importance of the presence of congregations that are culturally relevant, and the way God works through people to accomplish his mission in the world.
3. Development of the skill of reading the cultural & denominational contexts of the NA church, the ability to trace various biblical themes and observe how they find their meaning and function within the larger purposes of God, and a biblical theology of the church that posits Christ as its norm, community as its nature, shalom, reconciliation, and peacemaking as its purpose, and mutual discipling as its responsibility.

## Required Texts

The required texts are listed in the order that they are to be read during the semester. For specific reading due dates see the course assignments section of this syllabus.

1. Ott, Bernard. *God's Shalom Project*. Good Books, 2004
2. Banks, Robert. *Paul's Idea of Community*. Revised Edition. Hendrikson, 1994.
3. Snyder, Howard. *Models of the Kingdom*. Wipf and Stock, 2001.b
4. Dawn, Marva J. *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God*. Eerdmans, 2001.
5. Barrett, Lois Y., et. al. *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*. Eerdmans, 2004.
6. Guder, Darrell L. (Editor). *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Eerdmans, 1998

**Special Note:** The above texts are available for purchase at the FPU Bookstore and on two-hour reserve in the Hiebert Library. Students may make substitutions for texts they have already read. However, prior approval from one of the instructors is required.

## Course Outline

### Unit One

#### Understanding the Church & Gospel

The first unit of the course focuses on the Old & New Testament understanding(s) of God's reign and the church's vocation in the world. Initially, students will read Ott and Banks discussing these two works in small group settings under the guidance of the instructor and then submitting written responses to these works (see Course Assignments). Also, Tim Geddert will present a series of lectures on God's reign and the church's vocation in the world. Finally, students will write a position paper that indicates the model of the kingdom of God they currently favor of the several models explained by Howard Snyder.

- 1/10 Lecture by Geddert
- 1/17 Lecture by Geddert; Discussion of Ott.
- 1/24 Lecture by Geddert; Submit Response to Ott.
- 1/31 Lecture by Geddert; Discussion of Banks.
- 2/7 Lecture by Geddert; Submit Review of Banks.
- 2/14 Lecture by Geddert; Discussion of Snyder.
- 2/21 Lecture by Geddert; Submit Essay on Snyder.

### Unit One

#### - Summary of Content –

- Old Testament perspectives on God, God's creation, God's mission, and the people of God.
- Moving from the Old Testament to the New Testament (discontinuity, continuity, fulfillment).
- Jesus and the people of the Kingdom (Jesus' mission and message, the Kingdom community and the nature & purpose of the church).
- Grace and discipleship.
- The missionary nature of the early church.
- Models of the Kingdom, especially the relationship between God's reign and the church.

### Unit Two

#### Understanding the Church & Culture

The second unit of the course explores the question, "What would a theology of the church look like if it took seriously the fact that North America is now itself a mission field?" The instructor will present a series of lectures on cultivating "missional" communities and you will be asked to read Guder, Missional Church, Barrett, Treasure in Clay Jars, and Dawn, Powers, Weakness and the Tabernacling of God. The goal here is

not to finish, but to begin a conversation with each other about a missiological ecclesiology for North America.

- 2/28 Lecture by Bystrom
- 3/7 No Class (modular week)
- 3/14 Lecture by Bystrom; Discussion of Guder
- 3/21 Lecture by Bystrom;  
Submit Guder Critical Review (email is fine)
- 3/28 Lecture by Bystrom and Discussion of Dawn
- 4/4 Lecture by Bystrom  
Submit Essay on Dawn
- 4/11 Lecture by Bystrom and Discussion of Barrett
- 4/18 Lecture by Bystrom  
Submit Response to Barrett

## Unit Two

### - Summary of Content -

- The crisis of the NA churches, how the church shaped by Christendom engaged in mission, and the basic characteristics of a missional ecclesiology.
- Understanding North American culture, the key characteristics of the modern/post-modern NA culture.
- Understanding the church in NA, the role & structure of denominations, and "functional Christendom" or "churched NA culture."
- The church's vocation as a body of people sent to represent the reign of God as its community, servant, and messenger.
- The church's captivity to the powers and the church as an alternative community in terms of power, vocabulary, and economics.

### Course Assignments

The assignments listed below are designed to promote the course and degree objectives listed above. The assignments are arranged in the order in which they are to be completed. Most of the assignments revolve around the required readings.

1. Class Discussion and Participation: There is a great deal of reading and discussion required for this course. So it is imperative that you read all the material assigned for a particular day before class - highlight key ideas and take notes - and come to class well prepared to discuss what you have read. You need to do the required reading before class! Consult the course outline for the texts and topics that will be discussed and for assignment due dates. Be prepared to contribute to class discussion with your discoveries, reflections and evaluations. Dialogue is an important part of the learning experience. After all the written assignments have been graded, your final score may be adjusted down by as much as 10% for absenteeism, non-participation, or negligence. If you miss more than 20% of the class sessions and study group sessions, you may not qualify to

pass the course. The class sessions & discussion group meetings represent about 42 hours of your total work load.

### **Assignments for Unit One**

2. Responses to Ott's Book: Read *God's Shalom Project* by Bernard Ott before the in-class discussion on January 17. In the context of your group, discuss your reactions to Ott (a discussion guide is attached). After your discussion group has met, write up a two-page double-spaced response that reflects on the text by Ott and on the interactions within your study group as you discussed his book. For example, what new insights were shared? On what issues did some or all of you disagree with Ott? Assuming there was a diversity of opinions expressed by your group, how do you respond personally to the diversity of beliefs within your discussion group? What topics addressed by Ott would you personally like to explore more thoroughly? Book response due date: January 24. Please submit a hard copy or email your responses to Tim Geddert. The estimated time for this assignment is about 8 hours, including reading (5 hrs.), discussion (1 hr.), and writing (2 hrs.) assignments. 10% of final grade.

3. Critical Review of Banks' Book: Prior to the group discussion on January 31, read Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*. After your discussion group meets, you are expected to write a three-page double-spaced critical review of Robert Banks' book. You will be using some of your discussion time on January 31 to process your own personal reactions to his book with the larger group (a guide for your discussion is attached). What did you find persuasive? At what points were you not convinced? How were Banks' views helpful in your own growing understanding of the nature & purpose of the church? Where you agreed with Banks' viewpoint(s), how would you suggest they should be applied in today's church context? Your response is to be a critical book review, not simply a reflection on your group processing as in the previous exercise. So briefly summarize Banks' main points, then engage critically with the arguments, findings, and implications of his book. What are the main benefits of the book and where would you call into question some of its claims? Critical book review due date: February 7. Submit a hard copy or email your critical book review to Tim Geddert. The estimated time for this assignment is about 12 hours, including reading (6 hrs.), discussion group (1 hr.), and writing critical review (5 hrs.). 15% of final grade.

4. Essay on Snyder's Book: Prior to your discussion group meeting on February 14, read Howard Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*. After reading Snyder, you will meet with your group to discuss it on February 14 (a group discussion guide is attached). After your discussion group meeting, write a short, tightly worded essay (approximately 5 pages double-spaced) in which you select one of the models of the kingdom presented in Snyder's book. Select the model that you find most faithful to the teaching of Scripture. For this essay you are not required to do additional research beyond the three texts you have read in the course thus far. Of course, if you choose to do additional research that's fine! In your essay you are to define the model, indicating how Snyder presents it. Then refine it, if necessary, indicating how you would modify the way Snyder has presented it in order for it to capture your own convictions about God's reign and the church. Next,

defend your choice of models over against the alternatives presented in Snyder. In your defense, comment on how your model fits within the six polarities outlined by Snyder in his opening chapter. Finally, devote a single page at the conclusion of your essay to discussing why the contemporary church should adopt your model and how it should be embodied in today's church. In your discussion groups on February 14, you will be encouraged to share with the rest of the group the model you have selected, or the model you are inclined to embrace. Essay on models of the Kingdom due date: February 21. The estimated time for this assignment is 17 hours, including reading (6 hrs.), discussion group (1 hr.), and writing essay (10 hrs.). 25% of your final grade.

### **Assignments for Unit Two**

5. Critical Review of Guder's Book: Read Guder, Missional Church, chapter 1 –7 only, prior to the class discussion of his book on March 14. In the context of your group, discuss your reactions to Guder (a discussion guide is attached). After your discussion group has met, write a short, tightly worded, critical review of Guder's book. Here is a brief guide for writing your review. First, your critical review should begin by summarizing the book's contents in one page. Next, you should identify the thesis or main point of the book, citing a statement from the book if possible, noting any qualifications the authors introduce, identifying the assumptions that lie behind the thesis, and identifying facts that undergird the thesis. Don't hesitate to "play the devil's advocate" with the thesis. Third, identify and critique the process by which the authors attempt to establish the thesis. Do they proceed by adding or interpreting facts, by marshalling the data around a new way of configuring the topic, by redefinition, by establishing cause-and-effect relationships, by showing correlations, by tracing historical connections, by showing the absurdity or weakness of alternatives? In others, ask questions of the authors: does the process match the thesis? Is the argument sound? Finally, comment on the literary style of the book. Does it strike you as entertaining, attractive, powerful, obtuse, mundane, repetitive, convoluted, erudite or boring, say so and illustrate. You may even want to make suggestions about how the author or editor could improve the communication for a subsequent edition (with maps, charts, graphs, illustrations, etc.). It's always good to close with a punch and a statement or summation of the significance of the book. Keep the intended audience in mind; to forget the author's target audience will lead you astray in your review. And don't forget a critical review is both positive and negative. Critical review of Guder due date: March 21. The estimated time for this entire assignment is 25 hours, including reading Guder's chapters (10 hrs.) and writing your critical review. 25% of the final grade.

6. Essay on Dawn's Book: You are expected to read Marva Dawn, *The Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God* prior to the class discussion on March 28 (a discussion guide is attached). After the in-class discussion of Dawn, write a short, tightly worded essay (5 pages double-spaced) in which you indicate how churches in NA are being and acting as fallen powers. In your essay begin by describing Dawn's particular interpretation of the principalities and powers (pp. 1-34). What did you find persuasive? Where were you not convinced? How are her views helpful in understanding the biblical treatment of the principalities and powers? Next, respond to her discussion of the various

ways churches are being and acting as fallen powers (pp. 73-122). In particular, weave into your essay your responses to Dawn's questions on chapter three listed on pages 166-167 of her book. Finally, in your essay, indicate what you think it would mean for your local church to live by its weakness rather than its own power. Weave into your essay, your responses to Dawn's questions on chapter four listed on page 167. Essay on Dawn due date: April 4. The estimated time for this assignment is 18 hours, including reading (12 hrs.), class discussion (1 hour), and writing essay (5 hours) 15% of final grade.

7. Response to Barrett: Read Lois Barrett, Treasure in Clay Jars prior to the class discussion on April 18. In the context of your group, discuss your reactions to Barrett (a discussion guide is attached). After your discussion group has met, write up a two-page double-spaced response that reflects on the text by Barrett and on the interactions within your study group as you discussed her book. For example, what new lessons were learned? On what issues did some or all of you disagree with Barrett? Assuming there were diverse opinions expressed by the members of your group, how do you respond personally to the diverse perspectives of your discussion group? What topics addressed by Barrett would you personally like to explore more thoroughly? Response to Barret due date: April 18. The estimated time for this assignment is about 10 hours, including reading (6 hours), discussion (1 hour), and writing assignments (3 hours). 10% of the final grade.

### Summary of Grading & Academic Policies

Response to Ott	10%
Critical Book Review of Banks	15%
Essay on Snyder's Models of the Kingdom	25%
Critical Review of Guder	25%
Essay on Dawn	15%
Response to Barrett	10%
Total	100%

\*Class Participation Deductions (10% possible deduction)

1. MBBS Academic Policies are described at [www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies](http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies). These policies provide guidance on academic integrity and plagiarism, incomplete course work, extensions, dates for changing registration, non-discriminatory and inclusive language, appeals, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and will be held responsible for adhering to them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to you or a situation that you face in your studies, please speak to the professor or consult the Registrar or Academic Dean.

2. Evaluation. All written assignments will be assessed according the following categories: appropriateness, clarity, comprehensiveness, creativity, argumentation, form and care. "Student work will be evaluated by two standards: a) by what is considered the appropriate level of graduate performance, and b) by comparison with work submitted in a given class" (see the Academic Handbook, p. 10). The letter grades conversions follow the MBBS Grading Template: A (100-94%), A- (93-90%), B+ (89-87%) B (86-83%), B

(82-80%), C+ (79-77%), C (76-73%), C- (72-70%), and F (69-0%). The performance expectations are as follows: "B" is the baseline, which means the student is doing satisfactory work. "B+" or higher grades indicate the student has exceeded the baseline performance standard. "C" grade indicates that the student has not achieved the baseline.

3. Due Dates: Students are expected to submit written assignments on time. Late reading reports and essays will be graded down 2% for each day after the due date. This penalty may not apply to students who have a documented emergency that prevents them from submitting the assignment on the due date. Check with the instructor to see if alternate arrangements can be made. Students may submit their work by fax or email, unless the instructor indicates otherwise. After June 30, assignments will not be accepted unless the student has obtained a course extension.

4. Formatting Specifications. On questions of style and citation form, consult Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research papers, Reports, Theses*, 11th Edition. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000. The preferred documentation format is parenthetical citation style, either the MLA or APA.

### Select Bibliography

An excellent bibliography for research on the "missional church" concept is located in *Missional Church*, pp. 269-280. Resources are grouped according to the following areas: missional theologies of the church, signaling the current crisis, biblical and theological perspectives, historical and sociological perspectives, and vision for pastoral and congregational practice. Also, here is brief list of publications on this North American movement since 1998.

1. Lois Y. Barret, ed. *Mission-Focused Congregations: A Bible Study*. Scotsdale, PA: Faith & Life Resources, Mennonite Publishing House, 2002.
2. \_\_\_\_\_. *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns of Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004 (Forthcoming).
3. Stephen B. Bevans. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Revised and Expanded Edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
4. Brownson, James, Inagrace T. Dietterich, Barry A. Harvey, and Charles C. West. *Stormfront: The Good News of God*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003.
5. Marva Dawn. *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001.
6. Darrell L. Guder. *The Continuing Incarnation of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000.
7. \_\_\_\_\_. *Unlikely Ambassadors: Clay Jar Christians in God's Service*. Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA), 2002.
8. George R. Hunsberger. *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigins' Theology of Cultural Plurality*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.
9. Philip Kenneson. *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVCF Press, 1999.
10. Mary Jo Leddy. *Radical Gratitude*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
11. Wayne A. Schwab. *When the Members are the Missionaries: An Extraordinary*

*Calling for Ordinary People*. Essex, NY: Member Mission Press, 2002.

12. Craig Van Gelder. *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000.

### **Christian Mission & Modern Culture Series**

Listed below are some of the books in the Christian Mission and Modern Culture series edited by Alan Neely, H. Wayne Pipkin, and Wilbert R. Shenk, a series designed to help the church understand its missional responsibility to a culture in crisis.

1. H. D. Beeby. *Canon and Mission*. Trinity Press International, 1998.
2. David J. Bosch. *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*. Trinity Press International, 1995.
3. James V. Brownson. *Speaking the Truth in Love: NT Resources for A Missional Hermeneutic*. Trinity Press International, 1998.
4. Jerome E. Burce. *The Magnet and the Vial: How the Church Achieves its Purpose in a Culture of Doubt*. 2000.
5. Kenneth Cragg. *The Secular Experience of God*. Trinity Press International, 1998.
6. Darrell L. Guder. *The Incarnation and the Church's Witness*, 1999.
7. Douglas John Hall. *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*. Trinity Press International, 1997.
8. Barry A. Harvey. *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World*, 1999.
9. Paul G. Hiebert. *The Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts*. Trinity Press International, 1998.
10. Bert Hoedemaker, *Secularization and Mission: A Theological Essay*. Trinity Press International, 1998.
11. Philip Kenneson. *Beyond Sectarianism: Re-Imagining Church and World*, 1999.
12. J. Andrew Kirk. *The Mission of Theology and the Theology of Mission*. Trinity Press International, 1997.
13. Michael Warren. *At This Time in This Place: The Spirit Embodied in the Local Assembly*, 1999.
14. Lesslie Newbigin. *Truth and Authority in Modernity*. Trinity Press International, 1996.
15. Alan J. Roxburgh. *The Missionary Congregation, Leadership, and Liminality*. Trinity Press International, 1997.
16. Lamin Sanneh. *Religion and the Variety of Culture: A Study in Origin and Practice*. Trinity Press International, 1996.
17. Gordon Scoville. *Into the Vacuum: Being The Church in an Age of Barbarism*. Trinity Press International, 1998.
18. Jonathan R. Wilson. *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre's After Virtue*. Trinity Press International, 1998.
19. Charles C. West. *Power, Truth, and Community in Modern Culture*, 1999.
20. Wilbert R. Shenk. *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed*. Trinity Press International, 1995.

**Ott, Bernhard, *God's Shalom Project*. Good Books, 2004.**

This page is designed to facilitate a good discussion of Ott's book in your study group, and to give you guidelines for your subsequent response. You are to have read the book prior to the discussion group session. While reading, please reflect on the questions at the end of each chapter. Ideally you would jot down your answers to all these questions, but that is not being assigned.

**Guidelines for the discussion group (January 17):**

The easiest way of structuring your discussion time is to go to the end of each chapter and share your personal answers to the "For Further Reflection" questions, especially those that provoked some creative responses. However, you will not be able to discuss all the questions for all the chapters. Guard against trying to do so (that would be a very shallow hasty discussion!). But also guard against getting stuck on just one or two chapters. You want to be able to discuss the main issues addressed in the book within the discussion period of about 45 minutes.

Make sure you spend some time on general questions like the following:

1. What was most enlightening to you as you read this book? (That is, what did Ott help to clarify that you were confused about before?) Share these briefly with others in the group.
2. On what points did Ott confirm views that you already held? Share these with the group.
3. On what points did you either disagree with Ott, or at least have sufficient questions about his claims that you want to pursue the matter further? As "areas of disagreement" are brought up, discuss them in the group. Did you all question the point that someone brings up? Were some of you convinced and others not? Why? Does it really matter?
4. If there is still time, make sure you address some of the following issues (if you have not already done so).
  - the issue of "human choice" (Can humans really choose for God?);
  - the meaning and centrality of "Shalom" as the focus of God's project;
  - the development of Christology from "Jesus of Nazareth" to the Christ confessed by the church after the resurrection;
  - the relationship between the church and the "empire";
  - eschatological expectations (rapture, tribulation, etc.)

**Guidelines for writing your response (due January 24):**

You are to respond to Ott, *but you are also to respond to the discussion period*. What does Ott see as the main "story line" of Scripture? According to Ott, what are some key features of God's key strategy for restoring Shalom? On what issues did some or all of you disagree with Ott? Assuming there was a diversity of opinions expressed by your group, how do you respond personally to the diversity of beliefs within your discussion group? What topics addressed by Ott would you personally like to explore more thoroughly?

As you write your short response paper, reflect both positively and negatively on the book and the issues it raised for you, AND reflect both positively and negatively on the discussion experience and the issues it raised for you.

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**Banks, Robert. *Paul's Idea of Community*. Revised Edition. Hendrikson, 1994.**

This page is designed to facilitate a good discussion of Banks' book in your study group, and to give you guidelines for your subsequent critical review. You are to have read the book prior to the discussion group session.

**Guidelines for the discussion group (January 31):**

Since you will be writing a critical book review, the discussion period is a good chance to test your positive and negative reactions to the book with others. Have you correctly understood Banks' positions? Are you clear about why you affirm or do not affirm various views? What does that tell you about the influence of your own church background and commitments?

The following are suggested discussion questions for each chapter of Banks (please *select* from these):

1. What surprised you as you read Banks' assessment of "voluntary gatherings" in the first century (chapter 1)?
2. Banks views "freedom" as a central feature of Paul's understanding of the Christian life (chapter 2). How is this like or unlike what we usually understand "freedom" to mean in our world and in our churches?
3. What is gained and lost when churches have their own buildings and when church memberships are often many times as large as early Christian gatherings were (chapter 3)?
4. What did Paul mean by "ecclesia"? How is that like and unlike the ways we use the word "church" today (chapter 4)? What did you learn in this chapter about the priorities of the church according to Paul?
5. How did the metaphor "family" and the concept of "koinōnia" function in Paul's concept of the church (chapter 5)? How well is the North American church doing (typically) at embodying these concepts?
6. What features of the early church did Paul seek to capture with the metaphor of the "body" (chapter 6)?
7. How important was "understanding" for Paul (chapter 7)? How important is it in the church today?
8. Which of the "physical expressions of fellowship" should be retained, and which should find new and more culturally relevant counterparts in the contemporary church (chapter 8)?
9. How did you respond to Banks' claims about the role of spiritual gifts within the various kinds of Christian gatherings (chapter 9)?
10. Were relationships really more important for Paul than "rites" and "Scripture" (chapter 10)? Are they for the church today? Should they be?

11. The Pauline churches seem to have transcended social economic distinction, though Paul did not advocate “joint ownership” (as was practiced earlier in Jerusalem) (chapter 11). What does (and what should?) the church today do about social and economic distinctions and disparities?
12. Are you in agreement with Banks as he assesses Paul’s attitude to gender issues (chapter 12)? The 21<sup>st</sup> century western world is far different from first century cultural realities around Paul. How does or should that influence us when we try to determine an appropriate application of Paul’s teaching in today’s church?
13. Banks’ view is that (according to Paul) everyone participates in leadership in some way or other and that equality is a far more central feature of church life than leadership/followership (chapter 13)? Do you agree? What does that say to today’s church? (see also the next point!)
14. The church is “a participatory society in which authority is dispersed throughout the whole membership.” (p. 148, chapter 14) Does that fairly describe the New Testament church? Should the contemporary church move in this direction? Why or why not?
15. What did you learn in chapter 15 concerning the nature of Paul’s missionary teams?
16. What is the relationship between the “ecclesia” and the mission of Christians in the world (chapter 16)?
17. What kind of authority did Paul have? How did he exercise it? (chapters 17 and 18). In what way was he modeling himself after Jesus? And how should contemporary Christian leaders do so?
18. Respond to the middle paragraph on p. 190 (conclusion). Does it fairly represent Paul’s idea of community? What does it have to say to the contemporary church?

**Critical Review of Banks due February 6.** (Note: this is a critical review, not a report on your discussion groups!)

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**Snyder, Howard. *Models of the Kingdom*. Wipf and Stock, 2001.**

This guide is to help you understand the essay you are to write, and to suggest ways of using your discussion time to help prepare for the assignment. You are to have read the book prior to the discussion group session (**February 14**). If you have finished your reading well in advance, it would be good to refer again to chapter 1 (pages 15-24) in preparation for your discussion.

For your essay you will be selecting one of the models Snyder lists in this essay, based on which model you believe most adequately describes God’s Reign as presented in Scripture. You would thus choose from the following list:

1. The kingdom as future hope: *the future kingdom*.
2. The kingdom as inner spiritual experience: *the interior kingdom*.
3. The kingdom as mystical communion: *the heavenly kingdom*.
4. The kingdom as institutional church: *the ecclesiastical kingdom*.
5. The kingdom as counter-system: *the subversive kingdom*.

6. The kingdom as political state: the *theocratic* kingdom.
7. The kingdom as Christianized culture: the *transforming* kingdom.
8. The kingdom as earthly utopia: the *utopian* kingdom.

(An alternative is to select more than one which you believe can or should be combined to form a “biblical view”.)

**In the discussion group (February 14):**

1. Each person should indicate which model (or combination of models) he or she thinks is most adequate.
2. Take each model that is chosen in turn and have those who have selected that model describe how they understand it and why they believe it is most adequate. What is the biblical support for each model? Are there also major themes in Scripture that argue against some of the models? Because it is unlikely that all members of the group will choose the same model, the group can debate the positive and negative aspects of each of the chosen models.
3. Discuss what Snyder means by the “polarities” he discusses in chapter 1. In your opinion, how do the models chosen in your group fare when evaluated in the light of these polarities? And how do they fare in the light of other “tests” advocated by Snyder – i.e. tested against the teaching of Jesus, against their potential for instructing the contemporary church, etc.?
4. Discuss how the various models can contribute positively to the renewal of the church in its mission. Perhaps the diversity of models chosen will reveal that class members are not at all united on exactly what the mission of the church is! Discuss your differences.

**After the session**, you should be better prepared to write your paper (**Due: February 21**). Here are some tips to help you stay on track with this assignment. These are based on past experience!

- 1) Sometimes students present what they call a “model of the kingdom”, but really what they are presenting is their “personal passion.” Personal passion is good and some students both describe and biblically defend theirs very well. But be careful that you don’t confuse your passion with “the biblical concept of God’s Reign.”
- 2) Just because you find arguments in Snyder's book, does not mean they are necessarily adequate ones! Snyder does not endorse all eight models as equally valid. So if you include in your paper what Snyder says other people do when they defend that view, that does not mean you have adequately defended the view!
- 3) Choosing more than one model is O.K. But be careful about choosing two models which are about as opposite as possible on Snyder's polarities. It is unlikely that “the Reign of God” means two virtually opposite things!
- 4) Finally, some comments on two models that students sometimes misunderstand. Some students understand “Christianized culture” to mean that Christians get involved with culture, and “Counter-culture” to mean they don’t. Is that really what Snyder means by these?

Students have sometimes found this assignment tough, but usually have said afterward that it was also very rewarding. I hope these comments (and your discussion time) help, and I hope it is worth the effort! **Due date for written essay: February 21.**

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**Discussion of Guder on March 14**  
**Critical Review of Guder Due March 21**

*Missional Church*  
*By Darrell Guder (Editor)*

This page is designed to facilitate a good discussion of Guder's book (chapters 1-7 only) in your study group, and to give you guidelines for your subsequent critical review. You are to read the book prior to the discussion group session and prepare brief notes on the following questions in advance of your group discussion.

**Discussion Group Guidelines**

1. What are some of the aspects of the crisis of NA churches according to the authors? How does this fit with your experience? What would you add? What does it mean to say that the solution to the church's current crisis is spiritual and theological? What comes to your mind when you hear the word "mission"? How does your congregation interpret its call to mission? How is this interpretation lived out? How has the church, shaped by Christendom, understood and engaged in mission? If the church is God's instrument for God's mission, as the authors propose, what are the implications of this statement for our understanding of God, of mission, and of church? What's the difference between "sending" and "being sent"?
2. What does contextualization have to do with proclaiming the gospel? What elements of modern life are illustrated by Hank's story (19-20)? What other elements would you add? How do these elements influence your life? How do they shape the context within which you are engaged in mission? What are the weaknesses of using only rationalism and empiricism for determining what is true? Of the five elements of the modern self (25-31) which catch your attention? Which ring most true? What are some of the positive aspects of this dominant construct of self? What challenges does this view of self present to the proclamation of the gospel? How does Bruce's story (36-37) help you to understand the emerging post-modern condition? Where and how do you experience the patterns listed on page 37? What would you add? Which do you find most prevalent in your missional context? The authors state: "Our cultures way of determining truth, defining the self, and shaping society present to the church both critical challenges and significant opportunities." What challenges and what opportunities would you add to those discussed on pp. 44-45?
3. How does Sally's experience (37) and the dimensions listed on page 48 reflect a "functional Christendom"? What is meant by a "churched culture"? Briefly sketch the historical journey of churches in the USA (48-55) and then do the same with

- Canada (55-60). What are some of the similarities and some of the differences between Canada and the USA? Reflect on the issues contributing to Jim and Ruth's dilemma (61-62). In what ways have you, or your family, experienced these issues? How does their situation reflect the elements of NA culture as described in chapter 2? What has been the role of the denomination in NA and what insights have you gained about denominations?
4. What does it mean to say that "discipleship has been absorbed into citizenship"? Why is it important that the church not only believe in Jesus Christ but rehear the gospel he preached? What are the central elements of the gospel? What is the missional perspective when we speak of "building" or "extending" the reign of God? How is the missional perspective changed if we employ the words "receive" and "enter"? What is the relationship between the reign of God and the church? If the church is called to represent God's reign as its community, servant and messenger, what is distinctive about the church's being as a community? How is the church's doing shaped by "serving under authority"? How is announcing the reign of God related to our being and doing? How can the church's being, doing, and speaking address the most fundamental questions and challenges of the contemporary church?
  5. How has the church become captivated by the powers, the institutions, the spirits, and the authorities of the world? According to the authors, what is problematic about Neibuhr's approach to the relationship between church and culture? How does the description of the church in Letter to Diognetus (120) present a "bicultural community"? What can be learned from this text about "nonconformist engagement" with the world? What does it mean to be "citizens of God's reign"? How is the church described as an alternative community in terms of vocabulary, economics, and power? How does this description fit with contemporary expectations of the church? Why is the church to be different from the world? Why should "patient endurance" (124) and "sharing Christ's suffering" (129) be embraced as a central aspect of the missional church?
  6. If the life-creating activity of the Spirit is linked with the Spirit's community-forming activity, what difference does this make in your view of the nature and role of the Holy Spirit? Re-read Galatians 5: What does it mean to say that "flesh" and "spirit" are eschatological realities? How is your understanding of the fruit of the Spirit transformed by thinking of them as relational and communal qualities? What insights about the life and ministry of the church are stimulated by envisioning "a cultivating process that produces people in a particular way of life"? Discuss the concept of ecclesial practices. What are they so important? Are there other practices you would add to the list? What makes ecclesial practices (180-182) missional? In other words, how do they bring the gospel into engagement with a broken world?
  7. Describe the missional character of each of the four foundations for missional leadership (185-190). Which foundation is most familiar? Which one's do you find most challenging? Are there others that you would add? Briefly trace the changes in understanding of leadership from Apostles to Priests to Pedagogues to Professionals. How was each one shaped by their particular historical context? How did they shape a particular vision and experience of church? According to

the authors, what is the missed opportunity in recent shifts in the professional paradigm? How has your involvement in the church been shaped by the expectation of the leader as counselor, manager, and technician (196-198)? What is the difference between bounded sets and centered sets? How do both contribute to the formation of missional communities? What skills, experiences, and training are required for the forming of missional leaders (212-220)? Who needs to be involved? What needs to change in order for this to happen? What excites you about this vision of formation? What questions are raised?

### **Writing Guidelines**

The syllabus assignment asks you to respond to Guder's book. But keep in mind that you are also asked to respond to the discussion session. What surprised you in the group interaction? Did you mostly disagree or agree with one another? If you disagreed, were you happy with the group dynamics during the discussion? Were you comfortable or uncomfortable with the diverse convictions expressed in your group?

As you write your response to Guder, reflect positively and negatively on the book and the issues it raises. Also, reflect on the discussion group experience, noting both positive and negative features of it.

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#### **Discussion of Dawn on March 28**

#### **Essay on Dawn Due April 4**

### ***Powers, Weakness and the Tabernacling of God*** ***By Marva Dawn***

This page is designed to facilitate a good discussion of Dawn's book in your study group, and to give you guidelines for your subsequent response. You are to read the book prior to the discussion group session.

#### **Discussion Group Guidelines**

1. What is Dawn's primary aim or goal in writing this book? Try to find a quote to substantiate your understanding of the purpose of her book.
2. Chapter One addresses the question, "What are the powers?" How does Dawn answer this question? At what points does she differ with Walter Wink whom she critiques. What is the status of the powers in light of the cross? How does the church reveal the shackling and subjugating of the powers? How do we as Christians (churches) relate to the powers?
3. Chapter Two focuses on the tabernacling of God and a theology of weakness. According to Dawn, what is the church's true vocation as a created power? How does Dawn translate and interpret 2 Corinthians 12:9? Why are large proportions of today's churches in NA not living out of weakness? Why have

they turned pastors into CEO's? Why do we search for pastors who are handsome, sophisticated, charismatic – instead of pastors who are models of suffering? Why do so many of today's churches adopt the practices of the business world and its achievement models? Why do so many churches resort to gimmicks or Technique?

4. In chapter three Dawn writes about the church as being and acting as a fallen power. Do you agree with her assessment? If so, why don't churches resemble the weakness of Jesus? of Paul? of the early church? How is the church's vocation of weakness violated when it is influenced by the powers? Is leadership in the church important in Dawn's view? If so, what dangers do they need to avoid?
5. In chapter four Dawn speaks of the church as living by its weakness and imbued by the tabernacling of God. What does corporate weakness look like? How can a congregation fulfill its call to weakness as a power true to its vocation? How does personal weakness affect the corporate life of the church, and vice versa? Is it possible for a church or denomination to operate out of weakness? How do we avoid passivity or apathy? How does the church engage in the battle with the powers from a posture of weakness? Is weakness an effective or ineffective way to be the church?
6. At what points do you disagree with Dawn, or at least have sufficient questions about her claims that you want to pursue the issue some more?

### Writing Guidelines

The syllabus assignment asks you to respond to Dawn's book. But keep in mind that you are also asked to respond to the discussion session. What surprised you in the group interaction? Did you mostly disagree or agree with one another? If you disagreed, were you happy with the group dynamics during the discussion? Were you comfortable or uncomfortable with the diverse convictions expressed in your group?

As you write your response to Dawn, reflect positively and negatively on her book and the issues it raises. Also, reflect on the discussion group experience, noting both positive and negative features of it.

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**Discussion of Barret on April 18**  
**Response to Barrett Due April 18**

*Treasure in Clay Jars*  
*By Lois Barrett*

This page is designed to facilitate a good discussion of Barrett's book in your study group, and to give you guidelines for your subsequent response. You are to read the book prior to the discussion group session.

### **Discussion Group Guidelines**

1. The authors want this book to be a source of encouragement (xi) “so that we do not lose heart” (153). They want you to be inspired “to let the gospel of Jesus Christ ... shape your congregation” (153). Were you encouraged? Were you inspired? If so, how? Share briefly.
2. Having read the book, what is a “missional church”? Or, what does it mean for a church to be moving toward “becoming missional?”
3. The various congregations mentioned in the book are “clay jars” (155) that hold a great treasure (the Gospel). What do you remember about any one of these congregations that reveals that it is simply a “clay jar” and not a perfect model to be emulated?
4. Eight patterns of faithfulness are sketched in the book. Are all the patterns of faithfulness evident in your congregation? If not, what’s missing? Which pattern is least developed in your congregation? Which pattern is most evident in your congregation?
5. Of the eight patterns of faithfulness is there ONE pattern that you would like to create or cultivate in your congregation? Why?
6. Of the eight which pattern would be most difficult to cultivate in your church? Why?
7. Can you name patterns of faithfulness in your congregation that were not mentioned in this book?
8. At what points do you disagree with Barrett, or at least have sufficient questions about her claims that you want to pursue the issue some more?

### **Writing Guidelines**

The syllabus assignment asks you to respond to Barrett’s book. But keep in mind that you are also asked to respond to the discussion session. What surprised you in the group interaction? Did you mostly disagree or agree with one another? If you disagreed, were you happy with the group dynamics during the discussion? Were you comfortable or uncomfortable with the diverse convictions expressed in your group?

As you write your response to Barrett, reflect positively and negatively on Barrett’s book and the issues it raises. Also, reflect on the discussion group experience, noting both positive and negative features of it.