

SF5110: MENTORED SPIRITUAL FORMATION SYLLABUS (SAMPLE)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29 ESV)

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The mission of Dallas Theological Seminary is “to glorify God by equipping godly servant-leaders for the proclamation of His Word and the building up of the body of Christ worldwide.” As stated, this mission requires “godly servant-leaders,” men and women who image the character of our triune God. Their lives are to manifest self-giving love and humility in relation to both God and their fellow image-bearers. Such a life has been revealed most clearly in the God-Man, the Lord Jesus. Theological education must therefore prioritize the *formation* of believers so they become more and more like him, the One who is fully human and the true image of God. He is the standard and model we must imitate and follow in order to faithfully represent God’s rule over the earth—living, serving, and loving as Jesus did.

The Spiritual Formation ministry at DTS exists for this very purpose. In order to faithfully “proclaim” and “build up,” students must be engaged in the process of being conformed to Jesus Christ. Therefore, our mission in SF is “helping servant-leaders pursue Christlikeness.” We provide a context for the Spirit to transform students, a place of biblical community where students are encouraged to authentically and vulnerably share their lives with one another as they reflect, examine, share, and respond to issues of identity, community, integrity, and fidelity.

This two-semester course begins every fall. It is designed for distance students who will not be attending a main campus (Dallas, Houston, DC, or Atlanta) or a teaching site with established SF groups. Instead, they will meet face-to-face with a self-chosen mentor.

This course has four primary goals achieved through the following four modules: Identity, Community, Integrity, and Fidelity. First, this course challenges students through the *Life Inventory* exercises to grasp more fully the reality of their identity in Christ. Second, through the *Life Story* exercises this course challenges students to discover the triune God’s authorship in their lives—the way in which the Spirit has formed them through various experiences and relationships. Third, this course challenges students to examine the personal and corporate implications of sin and grace in their lives through the *Life Change* exercises. And fourth, through the *Life Vision* exercises this course challenges students to live a life of faithfulness by implementing their divine design in building up the Body of Christ and witnessing to a lost world. This last module helps focus the remainder of the students’ academic experience by providing an opportunity to explore how they might serve the Lord Jesus Christ for a lifetime of effective ministry.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

A. **Cognitive:** By the end of this course, the student will:

Identity

Gain greater insight into their corporate identity in Christ; gain greater insight into their unique identity in Christ; understand their identity in relation to God, the body of Christ, and the world; honestly appraise their beliefs, practices, and virtues,

Community

Reflect on the various experiences and relationships in their life; notice God's presence and activity in their life; discern particularly formative experiences and relationships in their life story; identify themes in their life story,

Integrity

Examine particular struggles with sin in light of their life story and future ministry; discern the underlying dynamics of their sin struggles; notice the effects of sin on self and their relationship with God and others; understand the means of grace available through God's indwelling Spirit, Spiritual practices, and the body of believers,

Fidelity

Synthesize personal insights from the Identity, Community, Integrity, and Fidelity modules; better understand her or his unique contribution within the Body of Christ; identify several potential ministry roles and contexts; clarify specific action steps to further prepare for potential ministry.

B. Affective: By the end of this course, the student will:

Identity

Appreciate the corporate aspect of being in Christ; appreciate their unique makeup in Christ; appreciate the uniqueness of their Spiritual Mentor; value the practice of periodic self-examination; desire growth in their relationship with God and in their Spiritual life,

Community

Celebrate the unique and faithful way in which God has worked in their life; value the process of discerning God's unique formative work in their life; appreciate the importance of presence, trust, and authenticity in relationships; desire to increasingly respond to God's formative work in their life,

Integrity

Value the practice of periodic, Spirit-led self-examination (Psalm 139:23-24); appreciate the practice of confessing their sins one to another (James 5:16); appreciate authenticity, trust, grace, and accountability in Spiritual friendships; increasingly desire the Spirit's scrutiny and transformation of their life,

Fidelity

Appreciate the need to identify gifts, strengths, struggles, and story in discerning calling; celebrate the potential means, roles, and contexts through which they can glorify God; value the need for both carefully attending to the Spirit's direction and personally preparing for future ministry destinations.

C. **Behavioral:** By the end of this course, the student will:

Identity

Honestly engage with and discuss the various *Identity* topics; create a personal position paper on the theological foundations of identity; share their position paper with their Spiritual Mentor,

Community

Honestly engage with and discuss the various *Life Story* topics; write a thoughtful and creative presentation of their *Life Story*; authentically share their *Life Story* with their Spiritual Mentor,

Integrity

Honestly consider and discuss personal and corporate implications of sin and grace in their life; write an authentic and thoughtful *Letter From Your Tempter*; authentically share their *Letter From Your Tempter* with their Spiritual Mentor; avail themselves of the means of grace available through God's Spirit, Spiritual practices, and the body of believers; write and share with their mentor a well-considered *Response to Your Tempter*,

Fidelity

Prepare a thoughtful and creative presentation of their *Life Vision*; authentically share their *Life Vision* with their Spiritual Mentor; cultivate a greater attentiveness to the Spirit's leading in their life.

III. COURSE TEXTBOOKS¹

The selection of textbooks does not necessarily imply the professor's endorsement of the views of the authors. Textbooks are selected for their perceived value in helping meet the course goals and objectives. *As graduate students you are expected to read and interact with texts critically and learn from both those with whom you agree and those with whom you do not.*

A. Required

SF100 Spiritual Formation Curriculum: Identity, Community, Integrity, and Fidelity.
Available as a PDF in the DTS Online course files for this course.

B. Suggested

General Spiritual Formation

Burns, J. Lanier. *Pride and Humility at War: A Biblical Perspective*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018.

Greenman, Jeffrey P. and George Kalantzis, eds. *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.

Jones, Barry. *Dwell: Life with God for the World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014.

¹ The selection of textbooks does not necessarily imply the professor's endorsement of the views of the authors. Textbooks are selected for their perceived value in helping meet the course goals and objectives. As graduate students you are expected to read and interact with texts critically and learn from both those with whom you agree and those with whom you do not.

Mulholland Jr., M. Robert. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1993.

Pettit, Paul, ed. *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008.

Schaeffer, Francis A., and James W. Sire. *The Mark of the Christian*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006.

Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Cultural liturgies, v. 1. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009.

Smith, James K. A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2016.

Wilhoit, James C. *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.

Identity

Bridges, Jerry. *Who Am I?: Identity in Christ*. Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2012.

Highfield, Ron. *God, Freedom, and Human Dignity: Embracing a God-Centered Identity in a Me-Centered Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013.

Community

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. New York: HarperCollins, 1954.

Jordan, Merle R. *Reclaiming Your Story: Family History and Spiritual Growth*. 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.

Integrity

Kenneson, Philip D. *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1999.

Lewis, C.S. *The Screwtape Letters*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001.

Lundgaard, Kris. *The Enemy Within: Straight Talk About the Power and Defeat of Sin*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998.

Plantinga Jr., Cornelius. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.

Wells, David F. *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998.

Fidelity

Guinness, Os. *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*. Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2003.

Marshall, Colin, and Tony Payne. *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything*. Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignments

1. **Curriculum Weekly Sessions:** Students are expected to carefully read and thoughtfully reflect on the weekly sessions of the course curriculum.

2. ***Foundations of Spiritual Formation Readings (Optional)***: Students are encouraged to read the following from Pettit’s book, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*:
 - Foreword
 - Introduction
 - Chapter 1: Introducing Spiritual Formation
 - Chapter 6: Character and Spiritual Formation
 - Chapter 7: Love and Spiritual Formation
 - Chapter 8: Leadership and Spiritual Formation
 - Chapter 9: Calling and Spiritual Formation
 - Chapter 10: Life Story and Spiritual Formation

4. **Memorization (Optional)**: Students are encouraged to memorize Philippians 2:1-11. Once memorized, they can recite it to their mentor, spouse, or friend.

B. Written Assignments

1. **DISC Personality Assessment**: Students are expected to complete an online personality assessment per the Course Lectures and Assignment Schedule (below). Details and instructions will be provided via DTS Online.

2. ***Identity Foundations Position Paper***: Students are expected to write a **3-4 page** paper on the theological and biblical foundations of identity, with an emphasis on the personal *and* corporate implications of what it means to be “in Christ.” Students will 1) present it to their Spiritual Mentor and 2) submit a short reflection describing the assignment. What did you learn through this experience of writing the paper and sharing it with your mentor? Students will submit their reflection via DTS Online as per the Course Lectures and Assignment Schedule (below).

This paper is a biblical theology with a very personal slant. In addition to (1) what it means to be “in Christ” both individually and corporately, it needs to include elements such as (2) places other than Christ where the student is tempted to put his/her identity, (3) “false identities” the student tries to present to others, and (4) areas where he/she has had victory in identity issues.

Creative Option: For students whose learning style benefits from creative projects, a second option for this assignment is available. It consists of two parts, both of which must be completed to receive credit.

1. Complete a 2 page paper as described above.

2. Complete a creative project to elaborate on the meaning of being “in Christ” both individually and corporately. Some creative examples might include: write and perform a song, write a short story or poem, create an art project, photography, or other medium of choice. This project will need to be shared with and explained to your mentor.

3. **Life Story Overview:** According to the guidelines in the course curriculum, students are expected to write and present their personal *Life Story* to their Spiritual Mentor. Students will submit a **1 page** overview chart of their *Life Story* via DTS Online as per the Course Lectures and Assignment Schedule (below).
4. **Letter From Your Tempter and Response Reflection:** According to the guidelines in the course curriculum, students are expected to write (1) a personal *Letter From Your Tempter* and (2) a well-considered biblical *Response to Your Tempter* to the specific issues and charges brought up in the *Letter From Your Tempter*. They will present both to their Spiritual Mentor. Students will write a **1 page** reflection paper on the experience of writing and sharing both letters and will submit this reflection via DTS Online as per the Course Lectures and Assignment Schedule (below). (Students do not need to submit their actual *Letter From Your Tempter* or *Response to Your Tempter*.)
5. **Life Vision Overview:** According to the guidelines in the course curriculum, students are expected to create and present their personal *Life Vision* to their Spiritual Mentor. Students will submit a **1 page** overview chart of their *Life Vision* presentation via DTS Online as per the Course Lectures and Assignment Schedule (below).

B. Attendance and Participation

1. **Videos:** Students are expected to watch all required videos included in course content (available at DTS Online).
2. **Spiritual Mentor Meetings:** Students are required to find a **Spiritual Mentor** of the same gender with whom they can meet face-to-face for the duration of this course.

Students are expected to meet with their Spiritual Mentor on a **weekly** basis over the course of each semester to discuss weekly readings, reflection questions, and assignments as per the Course Lectures and Assignment Schedule (below). Students will meet with this same Spiritual Mentor during both semesters (all four modules).

3. **Small Group:** Students are **required** to participate in a form of community/small group in their local church during their two semesters of SF5110. This could be a life group, community group, Bible Study Fellowship, Sunday School class, etc.
4. **Spiritual Formation Staff Guide:** Students will be assigned an SF Staff Guide for the duration of this course. The staff guide will serve as their contact for the course, a grader, and help with any student-mentor issues that may arise.

V. COURSE POLICIES

- A. **Grading:** Credit for this course is a non-academic credit (CR) required on student transcripts. Credit or No-Credit designation will be determined by the SF Staff Guide based on satisfactory completion of all course requirements and the mentor's assessment.
- B. **DTS Online Education (<http://online.dts.edu/>):** Dallas Theological Seminary's Online Education website (DTS Online or Canvas) provides content through video, slides, and

transcripts. It is a custom learning environment where students and faculty engage in theological content, biblical assignments, and community interaction. To login to the DTS Online Education website go to: online.dts.edu. Courses are structured in units (usually 1 to 2 weeks in length) with activities that include readings, reflections, and submissions.

VI. COURSE LECTURES & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE (SAMPLE)

Unit/Date	Session Topic	Assignments Due
Identity: “Who am I?”		
Unit 1: 8/26/24—8/30/24	Introduction to Spiritual Formation	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete “Overview of DTS Online” (at online.dts.edu) if this is your first online course. <input type="checkbox"/> Download and <u>read the syllabus</u> from DTS Online. (Send PDF of syllabus to your mentor.) <input type="checkbox"/> Download the curriculum from DTS Online. (Send PDF of curriculum to your mentor.)
Unit 2: 9/3/24—9/6/24 Labor Day: September 2, 2024	Introduction to Identity	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit short autobiography via DTS Online. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete and submit DISC Personality Assessment via DTS Online. <input type="checkbox"/> Watch videos on DTS Online. Read Forward, Preface, and Session 1 of curriculum, and complete Reflection Questions. *Begin meeting weekly with Spiritual Mentor.*
Unit 3: 9/9/24—9/13/24	The Image of God	Optional Discussion Group: 9/18 7:00 CST Read Session 2 and complete Reflection Questions. (Optional) Read Chapter 1 of <i>Foundations of Spiritual Formation</i>.
Unit 4: 9/16/24—9/20/24	Design	Read Session 3, complete Reflection Questions and Life Inventory Exercise 1. (Optional) Read Chapter 8 of <i>Foundations of Spiritual Formation</i>.
	Heritage	Read Session 4, complete Reflection Questions and Life Inventory Exercise 2.
Unit 5: 9/23/24—9/27/23	Our Identity in Christ	Read Session 5 and complete Reflection Questions.
Unit 6: 9/30/24—10/4/24	Belief	Read Session 6, complete Reflection Questions and Life Inventory Exercise 3.
Unit 7: 10/7/24—10/11/24	Practice	Read Session 7, complete Reflection Questions and Life Inventory Exercise 4.
Unit 8: 10/14/24—10/18/24	Virtue	Read Session 8, complete Reflection Questions and Life Inventory Exercise 5.
Unit 9 & 10: 10/21/24—10/25/24	Identity Foundations	Read Sessions 9 and 10, and complete Life Inventory Exercise 6.

		<input type="checkbox"/> Read and discuss your <i>Identity Foundations Position</i> paper with your Spiritual Mentor. <input type="checkbox"/> Submit reflection on <i>Identity Foundations Position</i> paper via DTS Online. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Identity Survey on DTS Online.
Community: “Who are we?”		
Unit 1: 10/28/24—11/1/24	Introduction to Community	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch videos on DTS Online. Read Session 1 and complete Reflection Questions. (Optional) Read Chapter 10 of <i>Foundations of Spiritual Formation</i>. Optional Discussion Group: 10/28 7:00 CST
Unit 2 & 3: 11/4/24—11/8/24	God’s Authorship	Read Session 2, complete Reflection Questions and Life Story Exercise 1.
	Experiences and Relationships	Read Session 3, complete Reflection Questions and Life Story Exercise 2.
Unit 4: 11/11/24—11/15/24	Formative Elements and Themes	Read Session 4, complete Reflection Questions and Life Story Exercises 3 and 4.
11/18/24—11/22/24	<i>Reading Week</i>	No assignments. (Enjoy some reading.)
11/25/24—11/29/24	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>	No assignments. (Enjoy some rest.)
Unit 5: 12/2/24—12/6/24	Telling & Hearing Our Stories	Optional Discussion Group: 12/5 7:00 CST Read Session 5, complete Reflection Questions and Life Story Exercises 5 and 6.
Unit 6-10: 12/9/24—12/13/24	Life Story Presentation	Read Sessions 6-10, complete Reflection Questions and Life Story Exercise 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Share <i>Life Story</i> with your Spiritual Mentor. <input type="checkbox"/> Submit <i>Life Story</i> overview via DTS Online.
Unit 11-12: 12/16/24—12/19/24	Knowing and Being Known	Read Session 11 and complete Reflection Questions.
	Turning Toward Integrity	Read Session 12 and complete Reflection Questions. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Identity & Community Assessment on DTS Online. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Community Survey on DTS Online.
<i>End of Semester</i>		

Integrity: “What hinders our growth?”		
Unit 1: 1/13/25—1/17/25	Introduction to Integrity	<input type="checkbox"/> Review syllabus for second half of course. <input type="checkbox"/> Watch videos on DTS Online. Read Session 1 and complete Reflection Questions.
Unit 2: 1/21/25—1/24/25 MLK Day: January 20, 2025	Growing in Grace	Read Session 2, complete Reflection Questions and Life Change Exercise 1. *Begin meeting weekly with Spiritual Mentor.*
Unit 3: 1/27/25—1/31/25	The Flesh	Read Session 3 and complete Reflection Questions. (Optional) Read Chapter 6 of <i>Foundations of Spiritual Formation</i>.
Unit 4: 2/3/25—2/7/25	The Seven Deadly Sins	Read Session 4, complete Reflection Questions and Life Change Exercise 2.
Unit 5&6: 2/10/25—2/14/25	A Letter From Your Tempter	Optional Discussion Group: 2/20 7:00 CST Read Sessions 5 and 6, complete Reflection Questions and Life Change Exercise 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Share <i>Letter From Your Tempter</i> with your Spiritual Mentor.
Unit 7: 2/17/25—2/21/25	The Spirit	Read Session 7 and complete Reflection Questions.
Unit 8: 2/24/25—2/28/25	Fear of the Lord	Read Session 8 and complete Reflection Questions.
Unit 9: 3/3/25—3/7/25	The Fruit of the Spirit	Read Session 9, complete Reflection Questions and Life Change Exercise 4. (Optional) Read Chapter 7 of <i>Foundations of Spiritual Formation</i>.
3/10/25—3/14/25	<i>World Evangelization Conference</i>	No assignments.
3/17/25—3/21/25	<i>Spring Break</i>	No assignments.
Unit 10: 3/24/25—3/28/25 (3/28 Good Friday)	Growing in Integrity	Read Session 10 and complete Reflection Questions.
Unit 11 & 12: 3/31/25—4/4/25	A Biblical Response	Read Sessions 11 and 12, complete Reflection Questions and Life Change Exercise 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Share <i>Response to Your Tempter</i> with your Spiritual Mentor. <input type="checkbox"/> Submit Reflection Paper on both <i>Letter from Your Tempter</i> and <i>Response to Your Tempter</i> via DTS Online. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Integrity Survey on DTS Online.

Fidelity: “How can we be faithful?”		
Unit 1: 4/7/25—4/11/25	Introduction to Fidelity: A Broader View of Ministry	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Watch videos on DTS Online.</p> <p>Read Preface, Session 1, complete Reflection Questions and Life Vision Exercise 1.</p> <p>(Optional) Read Chapter 9 of <i>Foundations of Spiritual Formation</i>.</p>
Unit 2: 4/14/25—4/18/25	The Keel	<p>Optional Discussion Group: 4/16 7:00 CST</p> <p>Read Session 2, complete Reflection Questions and Life Vision Exercise 2.</p>
Unit 3&4&5: 4/21/25—4/25/25 (1 week)	Winds and Currents	Read Session 3, complete Reflection Questions.
	Voice of Experience & Ports of Call	<p>Read Sessions 4 and 5, complete Reflection Questions and Life Vision Exercise 3.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Watch Dr. Burns’ Chapel: “Faith in Sight”</p>
Unit 5&6: 4/28/25—5/2/25	Bill of Lading	Read Session 6, complete Reflection Questions and Life Vision Exercise 4.
Unit 7-12: 5/5/25—5/8/25 (Final Exams)	Life Vision Presentation	<p>Read Sessions 7-12.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Share <i>Life Vision</i> with your Spiritual Mentor.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Submit <i>Life Vision Overview Chart & Summary</i> via DTS Online.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complete Integrity & Fidelity Assessment on DTS Online.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complete Fidelity Survey on DTS Online.</p> <p>Celebrate with your mentor what God has done!</p>
<i>End of Semester</i>		