

Taylor Seminary

## BI 510 A Biblical Theology of the Love of God

Winter Semester 2012

*To develop Christ-minded leaders who make a difference in the world.*

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**SCHEDULE:** Three weekends: January 20-21; February 24-25; March 16-17  
Fridays 6:30-9:30 PM; Saturdays 8:30 AM—4:30 PM

**CREDITS:** 3 [90 hours of work outside of class time]

### DESCRIPTION:

A biblical-theological examination of the love of God. The course will also look at the response of love toward God and the outflow of that love toward one's neighbor.

### OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should:

1. Have a more accurate understanding of the revelation of the love of God in the biblical canon, as well as the canonical portrayal of the relationship between the love of God and other concepts such as election, compassion, hostility, atonement, and particularity versus universality.
2. Have a better appreciation of what is entailed in the human response of love toward God.
3. Be able to articulate how both God's love and love toward God evidence themselves in love toward one's neighbor.
4. Know and love God and neighbor more fully and more truly.

### COURSE TEXTS:

Morris, Leon. *Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.

The student should also have a copy of the *Guide for Research and Writing (SBL style)*. This is available online on the seminary web site, as well on the Moodle site for the course.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

1. Class attendance and participation. Though there is no actual percentage attached to this requirement, excessive unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade.
2. Completion of all assigned reading. You will be asked on the final exam to affirm your compliance with this requirement. Again, there is no percentage attached to this requirement, but the level of compliance could raise or lower your grade. (40 hours)
3. Ministry Reflection paper, approximately 10 pages (2500 words), discussing your theological perspectives on the love of God and how they have been affected by the course lectures (primarily), texts (secondarily), and class interaction, and how you see these theological perspectives affecting your practice of ministry. Due March 30. (30%; 10 hours)
4. Major research paper, approximately 15 pages (3750 words), on an issue related to the love of God in which you are particularly interested. The questions listed at the end of the course outline may help to stimulate your choice of a topic. Due April 20. (40%; 30 hours)
5. Final exam, based on all readings and class lectures. This exam will be given online during the regular exam week. (30%; 10 hours).

## **EVALUATION:**

Ministry Reflection Paper	30%
Research Paper	40%
Final exam	30%

## **PENALTIES:**

All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned dates. Unless there is a valid excuse, late assignments will be charged a penalty of 5% per regular school day.

For the research paper you will be researching a variety of sources: commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, journal articles, etc. But the paper should not be simply a parroting of your sources, but careful interaction with them. Be sure to document all assistance you receive from your sources. Plagiarized papers will receive a grade of zero.

## **FINAL REMARKS:**

1. There is a Moodle web site related to this course at <http://online.tayloru.ca>. A number of items will be posted there. Instructions will be given in class for accessing the site.
2. It is my desire to be as helpful to you as possible. Please feel free to come by my office or call me at anytime (within reason) with questions or problems that you may be having. If I am not available just leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible. Feel free to contact me by email as well. I will pray for you and request that you do the same for me. Let us be sure to encourage one another as together we grow in the knowledge of our great God and prepare for service in his Church.

## **COURSE OUTLINE:**

- 1 The Love of God in the Old Testament
  - 1 Lexical Stock
  - 2 Canonical Overview
    - Pentateuch
    - Historical Books
    - Psalms
    - Wisdom Literature
    - Prophets
  - 3 Human Response
  
- 2 The Love of God in the New Testament
  - 1 Lexical Stock
  - 2 Canonical Overview
    - Synoptic Gospels and Acts
    - Johannine Literature (Gospel, Epistles, Revelation)
    - Pauline Literature
    - Catholic Epistles
  - 3 Human Response
  
- 3 Implications/Intersections
  - 1 Covenant
  - 2 Election
  - 3 Particularity/Universality
  - 4 Impassibility/Open Theism
  - 5 Wrath/Hostility/Judgment
  - 6 Atonement

Here are some questions that will be addressed, from a biblical-theological perspective, during the course. This list of questions may also serve as a stimulus for your choice of topic for your major research paper.

What is meant by the love of God?

What and whom does God love?

Does God love everyone?

Does God love everyone equally and in the same way?

What is the relationship between God's love and election/presdestination?

How does the covenantal concept figure into how God's love is to be construed?

What is the relationship between God's love and other similar concepts like compassion, goodness, kindness, mercy, grace?

Does God's love necessarily have emotional content?  
 Can God's love be construed as qualitatively and/or quantitatively variable?  
 How are the "love" passages to be related to the "hate" or "hostility" passages?  
 Does God progressively get kinder and gentler?  
 What is the biblical portrayal of God as an emotional being?  
 How accommodative is this portrayal?  
 Is God passible or impassible?  
 Can God be loving and hostile (wrathful) at the same time?  
 Is either emotion portrayed as foundational or essential to God's being?  
 Is God's love conditional or unconditional?  
 What is the relationship between God's love and suffering/evil?  
 How are we to understand intertrinitarian/intra-trinitarian love?  
 What role does love play in the atonement?  
 Is "God is love" too reductionistic?  
 What are the different words for love and what are the distinctions between them?

What is meant by love toward God?  
 Can love truly be commanded?  
 Does love toward God have to be emotional?  
 Can/does the normal Christian love the invisible God more than visible family/friends?

"And who is my neighbor?"  
 What does it mean to love the neighbor?  
 What is the relationship between God's love and human love?  
 Does God command his followers to love where he has not loved?  
 Is loving the neighbor identical to loving God?

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

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