



CECH 8302 Spiritual Formation in Childhood

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Division of Church Ministry

October 20-22, 2025

9:00 – 5:00

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course Description

In this course students will examine the process of the spiritual formation of children from birth through age 12 in light of their physical, social, emotional, and mental development. The roles of parents (home), the church, and culture in the process of spiritual formation will be examined.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this seminar, you should be able to understand:

1. Various theories of spiritual and faith development of children from birth through age 12.
2. The process of spiritual formation in childhood.
3. The role of parents (home) as the primary influencers in a child's spiritual formation; and skill in
4. Designing a process for spiritual formation in the home and church.

Required Readings

The following texts are required reading for class discussions. They are to be read in their entirety prior to the seminar.

Texts

Kennemur, Karen, Donna Peavey, Shelly Melia, and Kelly King, ed. *Children and Salvation: Biblical, Theological and Practical Considerations*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2025.
ISBN: 979-8384510604

Lawson, Kevin. *Understanding Children's Spirituality: Theology, Research, and Practice*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012. ISBN: 978-1610975254

Larson, Mimi, and Robert Keely. *Bridging Theory and Practice in Children's Spirituality: New Directions for Education, Ministry, and Discipleship*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.
ISBN: 978-0310104919

Nye, Rebecca. *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters*. London: Church House Publishing, 2009. ISBN: 978-0715140277

PDFs (posted on Canvas)

- Westerhoff, *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith*, "A Journey Together in Faith"
- Haywood, *Children and Worship*
- Kummer, *The Family Worship Handbook*

Select ONE of the following (for use in Assignment #6).

Submit your selection to dpeavey@nobts.edu no later than September 20. Books will be assigned on a first-come first-served basis. You may submit a book not on the list for approval if you desire.

Barna, George. *Revolutionary Parenting: Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2010.

Haynes, Brian. *Shift*. Group Publishing, 2009.

Haynes, Brian. *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting*. Randall House, 2011.

Hess, Valerie. *Habits of a Child's Heart: Raising Your Kids with the Spiritual Disciplines*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004.

Keely, Robert J. *Helping Our Children Grow in Faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008.

Sparkman, Temp. *The Salvation and Nurture of the Child of God*. Judson Press, 1983.

Stonehouse, Catherine, and Scottie May. *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey: Guidance for Those Who Teach and Nurture*. Baker Academic, 2010.

Murphy, Art. *The Faith of a Child: A Step-by-Step Guide to Salvation for Your Child*. Moody, 2000.

Westerhoff, John. *Will Our Children Have Faith?: Third Revised Edition*. Morehouse Publishing, 2012.

Yust, Karen. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Course Teaching Methodology

Methodology

This seminar will include individual research, presentations, discussions, and guest speakers.

Format

This seminar is taught in New Orleans with a NOLA2U option.

Assignments and Evaluation Criteria

Grading rubrics for the assignments are posted on Canvas.

Pre-Seminar

1. QQTP - Questions, Quotations & Talking Points (15%) Due: October 20

For each of the required texts, write a one-page document including each of the following:

- Questions: Note the points at which a question comes to mind as you read the texts. For each text, write a thoughtful question that invites analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of the material, or make connections between the readings and previous readings.
- Quotation: For each text, select a quotation that is especially pertinent or relevant to the main points of the readings. The quotation should be neither too short (1-2 lines), nor too long (10-12 lines). Cite the source.
- Talking Points. Write at least *five* detailed talking points, covering several different topics from the reading that show that you have thought seriously and critically about the reading. *This assignment is related to Student Learning Outcome 1.*

2. Theorist Paper (10%)

Due: October 13

Write a 7 to 9-page paper about the theory of development/spiritual formation proposed by one of the following theorists: Jerome Berryman, Sophia Cavaletti, David Elkind, James Fowler, Lawrence Kohlberg, Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, Albert Bandura, Lev Vygotsky. Email your selection to dpeavey@nobts.edu. Theorists are assigned on a first-come first-served basis. Requests should be submitted no later than August 22.

Include the sections presented below.

- Section I – A brief biography of the theorist (1 page)
- Section II – A description of the selected theory (2 to 3 pages)
- Section III– A critique of the theory. Present points of agreement and disagreement (Research this!); Determine congruency with Scripture (2 to 3) pages)
- Section IV – A description of impact upon ministry. Present how an understanding of the selected theory has or may impact ministry to children and their parents (2 pages) *This assignment is related to SLO 1.*

3. Theorist Presentation (10%)

Due: October 20

Develop a 15 to 20-minute visual presentation on your assigned theorist that addresses all sections of the paper. Guide a 10 to 15-minute discussion responding to questions from other members of the seminar during your 30 minutes of assigned time. A presentation schedule will be made by the professor and communicated to seminar participants prior to the seminar meeting. All presentation materials must be submitted to the designated discussion board on Canvas by end of day of presentation. *This assignment is related to SLO 1.*

4. Topic Research Paper (20%)

Due: October 13

Write a 12 to 15-page *analytical* research paper (excluding front and back matter). Support your research with a minimum of 12 resources. Submit the paper to the assigned discussion board and to Assignments on Canvas one week prior to the seminar meeting. You are required to read each paper prior to the seminar meeting and complete the *Doctoral Paper Evaluation* for the one to which you are assigned. The form is in Canvas.

Select a topic from the list provided and mail to dpeavey@nobts.edu no later than August 22. If you desire to present a topic not on the list, contact the professor for approval. Topics will be assigned on a first-come first-served basis and approved by the professor by August 22. A list of all assigned topics will be provided by the professor.

Media and Spiritual Formation of children
Developing a Biblical Worldview in Children
The Age of Accountability – Age of Reason
Children and Baptism
Evangelism of Children (Should children be evangelized? How should the gospel be presented?)
Practice of Spiritual Disciplines with Children
Role of Parents in Spiritual Formation of Children
Mentors (other than parents) on Spiritual Formation of Children
Children and Worship
Children and Salvation (Do they need to be saved?)
Godly Play (Jerome Berryman)
Family Missions/Ministry – impact on spiritual formation of children

Analytical Paper:

Ask a research question, *upon which you have taken no stance*, although the topic may be debatable and controversial. Your intent is not to persuade the reader that your ideas are right while those of others are wrong but is to offer a critical interpretation of primary and secondary sources throughout the paper--sources that should, ultimately, support your analysis of the topic. An analytical paper breaks down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluates the issue or idea, and presents this breakdown and evaluation to the reader.

Example of an analytical thesis statement:

An analysis of worship practices with children in the local church reveals a challenge facing children's ministers: to provide children's worship/church or have children attend corporate worship with parents and the faith community.

The paper that follows should:

- Explain the analysis of worship practices with children in the local church.
- Explain the challenge(s) facing children's ministers. *This assignment is related to SLOs 1 and 2.*

5. Research Topic Presentation (10%)

Due: October 20

Develop a creative visual presentation of the research paper topic (45 minutes), including group discussion during your assigned time.

A presentation schedule will be made by the professor and communicated to seminar participants via email. *All presentation materials must be submitted to Canvas by the end of the day of presentation. This assignment is related to SLOs 1,2, and 3.*

6. Book Talk (10%)

Due: October 20

Develop a 5 to 7-minute Book Talk *with a visual presentation* on the text selected. A book talk should make listeners care enough about the content of the book to want to read it. Be creative. (Search the web for ideas if you are unfamiliar with book talks). Submit an annotated bibliography to Assignments and the designated Discussion Board on Canvas. *This assignment is related to SLOs 2 and 3.*

Seminar Assignments

7. Theorist Presentation

Lead the visual presentation on your assigned theorist and guide a 10 to 15-minute discussion responding to questions from other members of the seminar.

8. Book Talk

Present the Book Talk with a visual presentation on the selected text.

9. Research Topic Presentation

Present the creative visual presentation of the research paper topic (45 minutes), including group discussion. *This assignment is related to SLO #1 and #2.*

Post-Seminar Assignments

10. Spiritual Formation Plan (25%)

Due: November 21

The educational leadership of your current church are exploring contemporary approaches to spiritual formation of children in children's ministry. (You may gain significant insights through observation and interviewing church staff, children's ministry leaders, and parents of preschoolers and children.) They have requested that you:

- help them understand children's spirituality/spiritual formation.
- recommend and describe at least three ways to foster the spiritual formation of the preschoolers and children of their church.
- recommend and describe at least three ways to foster the spiritual formation of the parents of preschoolers and children of their church.

Develop a spiritual formation plan (10-12 pages with a minimum of 10 sources) for the church in the following manner:

- Introduce the topic (½ - 1 page)
- Explain/define children's spirituality/spiritual formation. (2-3 pages)
- Describe the selected church - size, number of preschoolers and school-age children, and their current approaches to spiritual formation of preschoolers, children, and parents. (1-2 pages)
- Make at least three recommendations for fostering spiritual formation of preschoolers and children in the church. (3 pages) For each recommendation:
 - Describe what it might look like in this church context.
 - Provide a rationale, citing sources.
 - Provide support from current literature.
- Make at least three recommendations for fostering spiritual formation of parents of preschoolers and children in the church. (3 pages each) For each recommendation:
 - Describe what it might look like in this church context.

- Provide a rationale, citing sources.
- Provide support from current literature.
- Conclusion (1 page) *This assignment is related to SLO 4.*

Evaluation

QOTP (3)	15%
Theorist Paper	10%
Theorist Presentation	10%
Research Paper	20%
Research Presentation	10%
Book Talk	10%
Spiritual Formation Plan	25%

Course Schedule

Day 1

	Topic	Facilitator/Presenter
9:00	Welcome and Introductions	Dr. Peavey
9:20	Discussion of Required Readings <i>QOTP: Children and Salvation; Understanding Children's Spirituality; Bridging Theory and Practice in Children's Spirituality: New Directions for Education, Ministry, and Discipleship</i>	Dr. Peavey
10:20	Break 1 (10 min)	
10:30	Discussion of Required Readings <i>Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters</i> PDFs: <i>Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith</i> , "A Journey Together in Faith", <i>Children and Worship</i> , <i>The Family Worship Handbook</i>	
11:30	Lunch	
1:00	Theorist Presentations	
5:00	Dismiss	

Day 2

	Topic	Facilitator/Presenter
9:00	Welcome/Prayer	Dr. Peavey
9:15	Research Presentation #1	
10:15	Peer Review	
10:30	Break (5 min)	
10:35	Research Presentation #2	
11:35	Peer Review	
11:50	Lunch	
1:00	Research Presentation #3	

2:00	Peer Review	
2:15	Break (5 min)	
2:20	Research Presentation #4	
3:20	Peer Review	
3:35	Break (5 min)	
3:40	Research Presentation #5	
4:40	Peer Review	
4:55	Wrap up	
5:00	Dismiss	Dr. Peavey

Day 3

The schedule for Day 3 will be prepared when the number of registered students is known.

*Schedule is subject to change.

Course Policies

The following policies will serve to govern both the student and professor for the duration of this seminar.

Absences: Absences in doctoral seminars are not permitted.

Academic Honesty Policy: All doctoral, graduate, and undergraduate NOBTS students, whether on campus, internet, or extension center students, are expected to adhere to the highest Christian standard of honesty and integrity when completing academic assignments for all courses in every delivery system format. The Bible provides our standard for academic integrity and honesty.

This standard applies whether a student is taking tests, quizzes, exams, writing papers, completing Discussion Boards, or any other course requirement.

Assignment Formatting: Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be created in Turabian format. Assignments must be Word documents or PDFs, written in third person unless otherwise instructed, and created in 12 pt. Times New Roman font.

Assignment Submission: All assignments are to be submitted to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. of the due date unless otherwise indicated. Do not send files as attachments via email to the professor.

Classroom Decorum: Your participation is required for every class session. You are expected to:

- Come to the class with a constructive point of view, prepared to interact with the readings and resources related to the course topic.
- Dress appropriately and in accordance with the NOBTS Student Handbook.
- Turn off cell phones and not accept any calls and/or text messages during class.
- Use laptops appropriately during class.

Disability Accommodations

Accommodation for students with disabilities is determined and approved by the Assistant Dean of Students for Student Affairs. If you, as a student, believe you are eligible for accommodations but have not obtained approval please contact Conner Hinton immediately at chinton@nobts.edu or 504-816-8246. Students must complete the [Accommodation Request Form](#) and provide documentation of their disability. The Assistant Dean of Students notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of those accommodations. While not required, students and faculty members are encouraged to discuss details of the implementation of individual accommodations. The seminary reserves the right to consider each request for special accommodation on a case-by-case basis pursuant to the criteria enumerated above.

Electronic Devices: Electronic devices may be used in class only for taking notes and other activities assigned by the professor. Other activities are strictly prohibited. Laptops may not be open during presentations unless requested by the presenter. Phones must be silenced during class time. Any student found violating this policy may be asked to leave class and will be counted absent.

Grading Scale: Your final grade will be based on your total accumulation of points as indicated under the *Assignments and Evaluation Criteria* section of this syllabus according to the grading scale in the current NOBTS catalog.

Late Assignments: Only under extreme circumstances, and with prior approval, will a late assignment be accepted. Late assignments will be assessed with an initial 10 percent penalty and 1 percent for each day after the due date (i.e., 10/1 points for a 100-point assignment, 3/.3 points for a 30-point assignment). No assignments will be accepted more than two weeks after the original due date. Missed presentations may not be made up.

Netiquette: Appropriate Online Behavior: Each student is expected to demonstrate appropriate Christian behavior when working online. The student is expected to interact with other students in a fashion that will promote learning and respect for the opinions of others in the course. A spirit of Christian charity is always expected in the online environment.

Plagiarism: NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Professor's Absence or Tardiness: If the professor is late in arriving to class, you must wait a full 20 minutes after the start of class before you may leave without being counted absent, or you must follow any written instructions that may be given to you.

Recording Policy: Only official NOBTS recordings of class (CIV, Teams, Flex, etc.) are permitted. Student recordings, including any audio and/or video recordings, regardless of the media or format, and regardless of the intended or actual use, are not permitted without prior written permission of the professor. The class will be notified in advance should any such recording be approved. This policy is intended to protect the privacy of the students.

Revision of the Syllabus: The course syllabus is not a legal contract. Any syllabus revision will be preceded by a reasonable notice to students. The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the professor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by email notice.

Withdrawal from the Course: The administration has set deadlines for withdrawal. These dates and times are published in the academic calendar. Administration procedures must be followed. You are responsible to handle withdrawal requirements. A professor can't issue a withdrawal. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in the course if you choose not to attend once you are enrolled.

Additional Information

Canvas and CampusNexus Student (CNS): You are responsible for maintaining current information regarding contact information on Canvas and CNS. The professor will utilize both to communicate with the class. Canvas and CNS do not share information so you must update each. Assignment grades will be posted to Canvas.

Correspondence with the Professor: Every effort is made to respond to emails and phone calls within 24-48 hours, excluding weekends. Please feel free to contact the professor(s) with any question you may have regarding this course.

Help for Writing Papers at "The Write Stuff"

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer. A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found in the course Canvas shell, or can be located online at the Writing Center's page on the seminary website at:

<https://www.nobts.edu/resources/pdf/writing/StyleGuide.pdf>

Hurricane/Severe Weather Evacuation: For up-to-date weather information stay tuned to:

WBSN FM-89.1 -- WWL Channel 4 -- WWL AM-870 -- www.nobts.edu

Mandatory Evacuation: Hurricane season lasts from June 1 to November 30. If the Mayor or the President of NOBTS recommends that you leave the city, then do so. If a mandatory evacuation is called everyone except emergency personnel must leave. Staying on campus is not an option. See the *Student Handbook* for further information regarding hurricane preparedness, evacuation, and shelter.

NOBTS Emergency Text Messaging Service: Sign up for the NOBTS emergency text messaging service at <http://nobts.edu/NOBTSEmergencyTextMessage.html>.

Office Hours: Office hours are posted outside the professor's office. If necessary, contact the professor to schedule an appointment.

Student Wellness: Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep, and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your academic and ministry goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. Helpful resources are available on campus and an important part of the seminary experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. The Spiritual Formation and Student Life Office is here to help and may be contacted at 282-4455, ext.8246 or deansec@nobts.edu. The Leeke Magee Christian Counseling Center may be contacted at 504-816-8004 or lmccc@nobts.edu. Consider reaching

out to a friend, faculty, or family member you trust for help, getting connected to the support that can help.

Technical Assistance: For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests the Selfserve.nobts.edu or My.nobts.edu (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. Canvas@nobts.edu- Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Canvas Learning Management System (Faculty/Students/Staff) Canvas.NOBTS.edu.
3. TelephoneHelpDesk@nobts.edu – Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS on-campus phone system.
4. ITCSupport@nobts.edu – Email for technical questions/support requests in the Flex classrooms and for general technical questions/support requests. If you are not sure who to contact use this email address!
5. [504.816.8180](tel:504.816.8180) – Call for any technical questions/support requests. (Currently available Mon. – Thurs 7:00am-9:00pm & Fri 7:00am-7:00pm CST)
6. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Selected Bibliography

- Allen, Holly Catterton, ed. *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008
- _____, and Christine Ross. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*. IVP Academic, 2012.
- Barna, George. *Revolutionary Parenting: Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2010.
- Bunge, Marcia, ed. *The Child in Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.
- Bushnell, Horace. *Christian Nurture*. Memphis, TN: C. Scribner's Sons, 1916.
- Anthony, Michael, ed. Carlson, Greg, Tim Ellis, Trisha Graves, and Scottie May. *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation: 4 Views*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006.
- Caldwell, Elizabeth. *Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Children*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000.
- Coffey, Kathy. *Experiencing God with Your Children*. New York: Crossroad, 1997.
- Coles, Robert. *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991.
- Davis, Cos H. *Children and the Christian Faith*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990.
- Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981.
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- _____. *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting*. Randall House, 2011.
- Hyde, Kenneth. *Religion in Childhood and Adolescence*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1990.
- Ingle, Cliff, ed. *Children and Conversion*. Broadman, 1970.
- Keeley, Robert J. *Helping Our Children Grow in Faith: How the Church Can Nurture the Spiritual Development of Kids*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008.

- Mercer, Joyce Ann, and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore. *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005.
- Sparkman, Temp. *The Salvation and Nurture of the Child of God*. Judson Press, 1983.
- Stonehouse, Catherine. *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998.
- Stonehouse, Catherine, and Scottie May. *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey: Guidance for Those Who Teach and Nurture*. Baker Academic, 2010.
- Water, Mark. *What the Bible Has to Say About Children*. Nashville: Dimensions for Living, 2003.
- Westerhoff, John. *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith*. Minneapolis: Winston, 1980.
- Yust, Karen. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Zuck, R. B. *Precious in his sight: Childhood and Children in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1986.