



**MB** BIBLICAL  
SEMINARY

## Joining God's Mission THS 540

*The mission of MB Seminary is to educate and equip men and women to help lead the church in reaching Canada and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

Instructor: Doug Heidebrecht, PhD  
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Credit Hours: 3  
Prerequisites: None  
Course Term: November 18, 2024 – January 18, 2025  
Instruction: November 21-22 (6:30 pm - 9:30 pm), November 23 (8:30 am – 1:00 pm) at Willingdon Church

### Course Description

How can the church today participate in God's mission to reconcile all things to himself through Jesus Christ? This course explores how a Trinitarian missional theology, as reflected through the biblical narrative, shapes the church's identity and calling to witness to the good news of Jesus through its life, actions, and words.

### Objectives

This course's themes are informed by a distinct MB perspective in accordance with the Mennonite-Brethren Confession of Faith. This course will help you:

- Understand and appreciate a Trinitarian approach to understanding God's mission as portrayed through the biblical narrative.
- Reflect on the holistic nature of God's mission, the gospel, and the church's witness to Jesus.
- Explore the church's missional identity and calling to make disciples of all nations.
- Explore your own gifting, calling, and affirmation to join God's mission and witness to the good news of Jesus.

## Course Textbooks

Dickson, John. *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. (202 pages)

Flemming, Dean. *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013. (267 pages)

Goheen, Michael W. *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. (226 pages)

Tizon, Al. *Whole and Reconciled: Gospel, Church, and Mission in a Fractured World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. (222 pages)

Wright, Christopher J.H. *The Great Story and the Great Commission: Participating in the Biblical Drama of Mission*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023. (156 Pages)

Total pages = 1073

## Learning Intensive Schedule

Note: Attending all sessions of the course intensive is a requirement for passing the course.

Teaching Weekend (Willingdon Church)	
Thursday, November 21, 2024	6:30 – 9:30 pm
Session 1	Course Introduction
Session 2	The God of Mission
Friday, November 22, 2024	6:30 - 9:30 pm
Session 3	Jesus on Mission
Session 4	The Spirit on Mission
Saturday, November 23, 2024	8:30 am – 1:00 pm
Session 5	Discipling the Nations
Session 6	Called and Sent on Mission

## Course Assignments

Assignments are due by 11:59 pm (your time) on the day they are due. I would ask that you submit your assignments in Populi. Please double-space all written assignments. Once I have marked your assignment, I will put it in your grade book in Populi where you can check your grade and review the comments I made on the assignment (you will receive an automatic notification whenever I put a graded assignment in your grade book). Please note that I typically deduct 5% of an assignment's total possible value for each week that it is late (assignments submitted more than two weeks beyond the due date will not be accepted). If you find that you are unable to complete an assignment on time, I will grant one extension of up to one week for one assignment during the course (without penalty) when you inform me of your need for an extension before the due date for that particular assignment. I will also consider extensions in exceptional circumstances such as a medical emergency (when a doctor's note accompanies the request). For the times when I allow a student to rewrite an assignment, I will generally take off 20% of the assignment's value before assigning a grade to the rewritten assignment.

Below is an overview of all the assignments followed by a detailed description:

### Overview of Assignments

Week	Due Date	Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade	Cumulative Percentage
Week 1	Nov 21-23	Learning Intensive		
Week 2	Nov 29	Called to Join God's Mission	20%	20%
Week 3				
Week 4	Dec 13	Holistic Mission	20%	40%
Week 5		Discussion Groups		
Week 6	Christmas			
Week 7	Jan 3	Promoting the Gospel	20%	60%
Week 8		Discussion Groups	5%	65%
Week 9	Jan 17	The Mission of God and the Mission of the Church	35%	100%
Week 9	Jan 18	Course Evaluation	-----	-----

**A. Called to Join in God’s Mission (worth 20% of final grade)**

Reflect on your own experience of how God has called you to participate in his mission in the world. What does this look like in your life? How have you experienced God’s inner prompting or calling? How have you experienced God’s affirmation by the church or through others? How has God specifically gifted you to serve? What motivates you to engage in mission? The focus of this reflection is not on what you have done by rather on “why.”

Assignment length: 1500 words.

**B. Holistic Mission (worth 20% of final grade)**

Read *Recovering the Full Mission of God* by Dean Flemming and *Whole and Reconciled* by Al Tizon. The Western Church, in particular, has struggled with both conceptualizing and living out a holistic approach to mission. The church’s mission has often been portrayed as a tension between evangelism and social action or between proclamation and demonstration—often resulting in a disconnect in practice. Various ways of navigating this tension have been proposed, which range from prioritizing one over the other to seeking a balance between the two ends of a continuum.

Both Flemming and Tizon suggest a shift beyond envisioning the question about holistic mission as a tension between two poles. Flemming seeks to demonstrate how being, doing, and telling seamlessly express the holistic mission of God throughout the Scriptures. Tizon frames holistic mission as the commitment to reconciliation – between God and people, between people and people, and between God, people, and creation.

How would you describe what a holistic approach to mission looks like? Please provide both biblical support and practical examples of how the church engages in God’s mission.

Assignment length: 1500 words.

**C. Promoting the Gospel (worth 20% of final grade)**

Read John Dickson’s book, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*. Dickson explores the meaning of the gospel or good news (chapter 8) and highlights different ways believers, both individually and corporately, promote the good news of Jesus—through prayer, finances, works, behavior, evangelism, worship, and daily conversation.

1) How would you describe the good news of God (see Mark 1:14-15)? How would you articulate the good news we proclaim in our witness to Jesus? What is the good news about Jesus that people need to hear?

1) Choose the approach from Dickson’s book that resonates best with how you promote the good news of Jesus. Over the course of a week, what has this looked like in your life? How does this approach reflect your own personality, gifting, and sense of God’s calling? What are the opportunities and limitations of this approach?

2) Choose another approach, different from what you have looked at in the first part of this assignment. Over the course of a week, intentionally engage in this way of promoting the gospel. What did you do? How did people respond? What effect did you see in the lives of others? How does your experience impact the way you understand the good news?

Assignment length: 1500 words.

#### **D. Discussion Groups (5% of the final grade)**

During weeks 5 and 8, you will meet in a church-based discussion group for 90 minutes to discuss your own calling to participate in God's mission (week 5) and your experience promoting the gospel (week 8). A designated leader from the host church will facilitate the church-based discussion groups for students from the host church. If you attend another church, please arrange to meet with a leader from your church (and any other students in the class from your church) to discuss your integration projects (and send me the name and email address of the leader, so that I can contact them about your participation grade). Your group leader will coordinate with you and the other group members as to when it would be best to meet.

The assessment of participation in discussion groups involves attendance and actual participation in the group sessions (both are worth 50% of the discussion group mark). The discussion group leaders will use the following rubric to assess each group member's participation:

Excellent participation (worth 47-50/50) – The group member consistently engaged in the group conversations. The person did an excellent job listening to other group members and consistently added meaningful content to the conversations.

Great participation (worth 43-46/50) – The group member engaged in the group conversations most of the time. The person paid attention to what others said and added relevant content to the discussions fairly regularly.

Good participation (worth 40-43/50) – The group member sometimes engaged in the group conversations. The person was somewhat attentive to the group conversation and would add relevant content periodically.

Fair participation (worth 35-39/50) – The group member did not often engage in group conversations. The person seemed out of touch with the group conversation and would rarely add relevant content.

Poor participation (worth less than 35/50) – The group member rarely, if ever, engaged in the group conversations. The person seemed distant and uninterested in the group discussion and even other group members.

#### **E. The Mission of God and the Church on Mission (worth 35% of final grade)**

Read *The Great Story and the Great Commission* by Christopher J.H. Wright and *A Light to the Nations* by Michael W. Goheen. These authors highlight how the central theme in the biblical

story, which begins with creation and ends with a new creation, is God’s mission to reconcile and renew all things to himself through Jesus Christ. The coming of the kingdom of God is embodied in Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension. God now calls and commissions a people, the church, to participate in his redemptive mission. This assignment offers the opportunity to connect the biblical story of God’s mission with the practice of local church on mission today.

Imagine you are a pastor/leader in a local church responsible for facilitating how the church understands and engages in mission. How would you connect the mission of God, the good news of Jesus, and the call for the church to engage practically in God’s mission? How could you help the church understand its role in the biblical story and grasp its missional identity? How might the local church holistically embody the kingdom of God and witness through its life, actions, and words to the good news of Jesus Christ? What would it look like for the church to participate in God’s mission in its particular context?

This assignment provides the opportunity articulate your missional theology and envision how it could shape the missional practice of the local church. You may use your current church as the “setting” for this assignment or a previous church you were a part of. Through the assignment you need to be able to articulate what is the mission of God, what is the good news, and how can the local church practically participate in God’s mission.

Assignment length: 3000 words.

### Course Evaluation

Near the conclusion of this course, you will be asked to complete a course evaluation. Because feedback is very important to us, the course evaluation is a required part of the course and is tied to the submission of your last assignment. The course evaluation will be integrated into the Populi classroom in Week 7.

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description	Grade Point	Meaning in Graduate Work
A+	97-100	Superior	4.30	Exceptionally well-reasoned, compelling development of position. Outstanding incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Strikingly appropriate examples. Extraordinary insight, critical analytical and evaluative ability, and creativity. Superlative style and language usage. Makes an original contribution and is potentially publishable.
A	93-96.99	Excellent	4.00	Well-argued and convincing development of position. Insightful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Notably appropriate examples. Excellent insight, critical analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Impressive style and language use.
A-	90-92.99	Very Good	3.70	Thorough and plausible development of position. Skilful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Very good examples. Very good insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Commendable and fluent style and language usage.
B+	87-89.99	Proficient	3.30	Proficient development of position. Appropriate incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Relevant

				examples. Good quality insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Clear and correct style and language usage.
B	83-86.99	Good	3.00	Competent development of position, but possibly with some gaps and/or limitations. Good incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Good examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally good style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
B-	80-82.99	Average	2.70	Average development of position, but with obvious gaps and/or limitations. Satisfactory incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Satisfactory examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally satisfactory style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
C+	77-79.99	Adequate	2.30	Adequate development of position with significant gaps and/or limitations. Some incorporation of personal vision as well as references and resources. Adequate use of examples. Very little creativity. Considerable number of issues related to coherence and style.
C	73-76.99	Acceptable	2.00	Limited development of position with a noticeable lack of consistency with personal vision or references. Limited integration with external sources. Acceptable analytic and evaluative ability. Numerous weaknesses in terms of clarity, coherence, and grammar.
C-	70-72.99	Needs Work	1.70	Passable but unimpressive development of position. Position not completely consistent with personal vision or references and resources not taken fully into account or examples are basic or not completely convincing or barely acceptable insight and analytic and evaluative ability. Adequate style and language usage, but with weaknesses in some respects (e.g., clarity, coherence, grammar). Overall quality shows noticeable deficiencies.
F	Below 70	Below Standard	0.00	Unacceptable work at graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and/or competence in several of the criteria described above. This grade is a failing grade at the graduate level.

### Artificial Intelligence

Students may use AI tools (eg, ChatGPT, Bing) to assist in research for assignments for this course, as long as any assistance or content that the AI tools provide or create is identified as a source and is properly and fully cited. Citation is not needed for simple proof-reading and editing (eg, Grammarly).

### Paper Formatting

Students are required to adhere to the Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format for all papers. Please consult the [Purdue Owl](#) website for information or:

Turabian, Kate, L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Thesis, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

### **Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism**

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire MB Seminary community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at MB Seminary.

### **Assignment Grade Appeals**

Students can appeal their grade to the course instructor by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. Deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made directly to Dr. Brian Cooper, Director of Student Development, [briancooper@mbseminary.ca](mailto:briancooper@mbseminary.ca).

### **Web Support-Student Portal** — <https://mbseminary.populiweb.com>

All students at MBS will receive a MBS-Populi username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application. If you have any difficulty with your password or your login credentials, please contact Keith Reed, Director of Ministry Support, ([keithreed@mbseminary.ca](mailto:keithreed@mbseminary.ca)).

### **Course Intensive/Campus Closure**

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to your church host and contact.

### **Equity of Access**

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the MB Seminary Director of Student Development ([briancooper@mbseminary.ca](mailto:briancooper@mbseminary.ca)) of that fact **before the beginning of a course** so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. To repeat: To ensure that instructors know to accommodate a student who has a learning access issue, the student must inform the Director of Student Development of a disability before the beginning of the class. After that is too late.