



# Faith Pulpit

## **Faith Baptist Seminary...A Distinctive Graduate School!**

“Seminaries are all alike. They all prepare students for Christian ministries, so it really makes little difference where you attend seminary.” These statements represent the way some people respond to the idea of seminary training. It is true, seminaries do have many things in common and yet they are very distinct from one another.

You do not choose a seminary because of location but because of its distinctives that will meet your academic and ministry goals. All seminaries are the same in that they are graduate schools, dedicated to preparing men and women for Christian ministries. Their distinctiveness becomes evident in such things as philosophy of education, curriculum, faculty and objectives.

A brief perusal of seminary catalogs will highlight the different approaches available in these areas. It is not the purpose of this article to critique the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches, but to simply identify where the differences exist.

The focus of instruction in one seminary is to balance learning with the capacity for making theological judgments, so that its students will develop discernment, integrate the Word with today's culture and provide credibility or believability for the preacher. Another seminary states that its goal is to train students to so master the changeless truth of God's Word that they can communicate it to a changing society. One speaks of preparing scholars for teaching and research in professional church ministries, whereas the other seeks to prepare servants of God who know how to correctly handle the Word of God in today's world. The differences in educational philosophy and objectives are clearly defined.

Practical Christian service is another area where seminaries differ. Some offer a three-year Master of Divinity program with an internship program, another will offer the same M.Div. degree with a two-year academic program and one entire year of internship. One places the emphasis of its education on practical experience while the other stresses the academic training. Internships also vary as to the degree of control held by the seminary. One approach is to have them highly controlled, with the seminary selecting pastors and churches where internships will be permitted and the program spelled out with great specificity. Others view the internship as the compatible agreement between a pastor, a student, and the seminary. The student is introduced to every facet of the ministry, with emphasis on those areas where one is the weakest.

**Faith Baptist Theological Seminary has an approach to training that is marked by several key distinctives.**

### **I. Academic Training Balanced With Practical Experience**

FBTS balances a strong academic program with a flexible internship. Students are evaluated to determine specific needs in practical training. Three full years of academic training is required for the M.Div. degree. Practical Christian experience is interwoven within this three year period. An internship program is designed to give each student the maximum experience needed to prepare one for ministry. There is a close, but not highly controlled relationship between the Seminary, the training pastor, and the student.

### **II. A “Leading—By—Serving” Attitude**

FBTS seeks to train servants for the Lord Jesus Christ’s ministry. We do not talk about becoming “scholars” or “professionals” because those terms often refer to the elevation of academia, the preparation for a “job” rather than becoming involved in “ministry.” To minister is to lead by serving, to learn so as to labor, to humble self and exalt the Christ whom we serve. We seek to train students who are not content to wander through the fog of philosophical intellectualism. Rather, FBTS seeks to fire the hearts of students along with challenging their minds. We believe that servants of Christ should have a heart for people, as well as a mind that is stimulated academically. Training at FBTS prepares a student to know the Word of God thoroughly and to care for people compassionately.

### **III. A Conservative Stance**

FBTS is a “conservative” seminary. That term means several things. We mean that FBTS is a strongly traditional training center. To us, conservative means to avoid the extremes of today’s world, both to the left and the right. Conservative means to be distinctively different from the philosophies of a world system that denies God and exalts man. The conservative position of FBTS is reflected in the classroom where the Bible sets the perimeters for every subject, and in the student’s decorum that

avoids extremes of dress and hair style, and in a theology that is clearly dispensational. Conservatism at FBTS does not ignore the world, but it chooses not to adopt the extremes of the world.

#### **IV. An Aggressive Emphasis**

FBTS is a seminary on the move. Whereas some prefer to describe their approach to training as “progressive,” FBTS would use the term “aggressive!” That is, aggressive in keeping abreast of high-tech methodologies that may be useful in the ministry. FBTS believes in training servants for Christ who are aggressive in using every possible means to reach their world with the Gospel.

FBTS stresses the urgency of evangelism and ministry. Students are challenged by exhortation and example that witnessing, teaching, and preaching are the primary business of the ministry. We believe that service to Christ is more than holding the fort for Jesus, it is storming the strongholds of evil for Jesus.

FBTS is an old-fashioned type of seminary that believes serving Jesus Christ today is the greatest challenge the church has ever faced. We believe that the next generation of preachers, missionaries, and Christian educators must have the tools and the training for reaching the world with God’s Word. We are training laborers for Christ’s harvest field whose hearts beat with the excitement of this challenge. These are the things that cause FBTS to stand out distinctively among seminaries today.

#### **Dr. Elvin K. Mattison**

Former Professor at [Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary](#) | [Other Articles](#)

*Dr. Elvin K. Mattison (Ph.D., Wayne State University) was a distinguished pastor, educator, and theologian with a profound commitment to ministry and theological education. Dr. Mattison dedicated 22 years to pastoral ministry in Michigan and Connecticut before transitioning to academia. He served as a professor at institutions including Spurgeon Baptist Bible College in Mulberry, Florida; Northwestern Baptist Seminary in Tacoma, Washington; and Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa.*

*His international influence extended through teaching pastors at the doctoral level in India and South Korea. Known for his beautiful Irish tenor voice, he recorded an album titled "Songs of the Savior." Dr. Mattison entered glory in 2004.*