



Faith Pulpit

Selecting a Seminary

Are you in the process of selecting a seminary? Do you know someone who is? Do you regularly give advice to potential seminarians as they work their way through the selection process? You probably will not be surprised to learn that I recommend Faith Baptist Theological Seminary (FBTS) to potential seminarians. Very simply, all those who desire to train for ministry within Baptist fundamentalism should consider attending FBTS. I propose three reasons why you and others should consider FBTS. First, FBTS provides advanced academic training and grants degrees that are regionally accredited. Second, FBTS prepares students for the Baptist ministry. Our alumni faithfully serve the Lord throughout the world, and their service proves the value of their training. Third, FBTS uncompromisingly nurtures fundamentalist convictions. We always have, and we pray we always will.

Academic Training

Sometimes high school students choose a college or university because its football team is ranked (even though they will never play), or because their friends plan to go there (even though they will be too busy to see their old friends all that much), or for some other adolescent reason. They soon realize, however, that the quality of their academic training should have been the determining factor in their college selection. Higher education, after all, is all about higher education. The faculty does not play merely a significant role in an education—it plays the crucial role. Potential seminarians intuitively recognize this truth; and I am, therefore, delighted to highlight the fine faculty which God has built here at FBTS. There are several other great seminary faculties within Baptist fundamentalism, and I do not in any way intend to diminish their worth. But since I am the dean of FBTS, you should expect me to extol the virtues of the FBTS faculty, and I would not want to disappoint you!

Our resident members of the faculty all have multiple advanced degrees. Several have two doctorates. Two men are currently working on a second doctorate. They are all intelligent, perceptive, and

discerning. Their areas of proficiency range from systematic theology to historical theology, and from pastoral theology to biblical studies. The resident professors teach all the standard courses in noteworthy fashion. In addition, they teach many specialized courses, including Advanced Soteriology, Akkadian, and Current Issues in Pastoral Theology. The list could go on and on.¹ Several faculty members from the college regularly teach a course or module, and they too bring expertise into the classroom. FBTS benefits from the strong faculty, modern library, and rich academic heritage of a Bible college that has been in existence since 1921.² In addition, every year we offer about twenty-five abbreviated-format courses called modules.³ Visiting faculty members from around the country staff some of these modules. We invite them to campus because they are some of the most distinguished professors and pastors within fundamentalism. God has blessed FBTS with a fine faculty indeed!⁴

FBTS is regionally accredited, and we offer five different master's degrees. Potential seminarians would be hard pressed to name more than a very few seminaries that are both regionally accredited and unashamedly fundamental. FBTS is one of the very few. This means that our alumni possess degrees of unquestioned merit—whether within fundamentalism or without. This means that we have demonstrated to skilled consultant-evaluators the intrinsic worth of an FBTS education. We have openly declared our fundamentalist mission, and after intense scrutiny the accrediting association has declared that we fulfill our mission. Also, FBTS has experienced marked enrollment growth in the past five years, indicating a growing confidence within Baptist fundamentalism that FBTS is an ideal place to train for ministry within the constituency.

Ministry Preparation

Some seminaries have an academically distinguished faculty, and others have a ministry-minded faculty, but FBTS has both. Members of the faculty are all men of scholarship and service, of books and people. They all have a passion for the Lord's Church. For example, one resident member of the faculty also pastors a church which he planted here in the Des Moines area. The church is currently in its second building program. Another faculty member has over 18 years of pastoral experience. He has pastored small and large churches, been involved in church planting and rescue works, and taught in several Bible colleges and seminaries. Another faculty member is the director of a local church's evangelism program. Another ministers in churches across the country through his Bible conference ministry. Still another is the senior pastor of a local church. The students follow the example set by the faculty. All students are involved in Christian service within fundamental Baptist churches here in the Des Moines area, and all M.Div. students complete a ministry apprenticeship during their years at FBTS.

Faculty members are involved in ministry not only here in central Iowa, but also on the other sides of the oceans. They are noted for their evangelistic and missionary zeal. As the dean of FBTS, my heart is constantly warmed as I hear of faculty members who are witnessing and praying for their lost friends

and neighbors. Faculty members not only understand the gospel—they boldly proclaim it. They tote Hebrew Bibles and gospel tracts; they stay up late studying the doctrines of grace and get up early to pray for open doors to share the gospel. Just this past summer, two of the members of the resident faculty traveled overseas to labor in several of the mission fields of the world. This is typical. It is little wonder, then, that so many of our graduates end up serving Christ in some benighted location of the world—and rejoicing that they were counted worthy to pour out their lives as an offering to God in this way!

So it is with the members of the faculty. With humility they have dedicated their lives, sacrificed so much, and complained so little. Here I am playing the fool, bragging on the faculty, and yet they do not see themselves in these ways. They are merely doing the things God has called them to do. They are merely laboring according to God’s enablement and power which works so mightily through them.⁵ No prima donnas here, only self-effacing servants who labor together in one accord.

It is no exaggeration to say that most every classroom experience at FBTS is “practical.” Professors are constantly sharing not only factual knowledge but practical advice, anecdotal ministry scenarios, and lessons learned through failure and success. Our professors are not merely professors; they are also practitioners. We have a rare union of the practical and the theoretical. This combination is rare but necessary, because a seminary education is a professional education in the very highest sense of the term. Future doctors and lawyers should be taught by practicing doctors and lawyers, and future pastors and missionaries should be taught by practicing pastors and missionaries. A seminary is not merely a “grad school;” it is a graduate school for professional ministry training. We give God thanks because He has blessed us with both academic excellence and ministry passion.

Fundamentalist Instruction

A third reason why you should consider attending FBTS is that we earnestly contend for the faith.⁶ Without being contentious, we assert the pure teachings of our Lord and of His apostles. The faculty here draws theological distinctions, commends resultant biblical separation, and lovingly challenges students to do the same. We expect our students to faithfully commit to others those very things they have learned here,⁷ and to mark those who walk contrariwise. Sure, we are on the “cutting-edge” in our various fields, but we are not so innovative that we have moved away from the truth. Fundamentalist instruction takes place in classrooms, in chapels, at the lunch table, and even sometimes at supper. We see ourselves as a “fellowship of scholarship,” where students and professors mutually edify one another. We know that fundamentalism is not merely explained; it is modeled by veteran for new recruit. We exhort our students to develop the mind of a scholar, the heart of a pastor, and the convictions of a fundamentalist. We cannot instill that which has not already been infused in us.

The only course required in all five of our master’s programs is a module on the History of Fundamentalism. Why do we require all of our students to take such a course? Because we expect our

graduates to know the history, the current condition, and the future challenges facing our movement. If FBTS is to be one of the premier officer training schools for leadership within fundamentalism, then we must stress the distinctives of the movement. We hold our fundamentalism dear, but ours has not “gone to seed.” We do not perpetuate it with regret or cynicism. We see it as an heirloom, a rich heritage, a regal gift passed on to us by those who stood for the truth. Because we love Christ and His Church, and because we honor the sacrifice of those who perfected holiness in the fear of God,⁸ we too choose to be separate and to “touch not the unclean thing” that God might receive us.⁹ We are not ashamed of our fundamentalism, nor do we make our boast in it. We are thrilled by it, and we are thrilled every time one of our students purges himself from the old ways of thinking and acting so that he might be an honorable vessel, set apart and useful for the Master.¹⁰

Therefore, because God has blessed FBTS with quality academic programs, a passionate ministry emphasis, and sound fundamentalist instruction, I recommend FBTS to all who desire advanced training for ministry within Baptist fundamentalism. I also encourage others who are like-minded to recommend the seminary. May the Lord continue to bless FBTS for His glory, and may He continue to send students our way so that they might be trained for His service.

Works Cited

1. FBTS 2001-2004 Catalog, 48–58.
2. In addition, single men attending FBTS, who missed out on finding a wife during their undergraduate years, would have several more years of opportunity here at FBTS to find God’s “special someone,” while attending a seminary connected with a Bible college!
3. FBTS 2003–2004 Module Brochure. You may request a copy by calling 1-800-FAITH-4-U. You may also access the module offerings on-line at www.faith.edu.
4. FBTS 2001–2004 Catalog, 17–24.
5. Colossians 1:29.
6. Jude 3.
7. 2 Timothy 2:2.
8. 2 Corinthians 7:1.
9. 2 Corinthians 6:17,18.
10. 2 Timothy 2:20–23.

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