

**Should
I Go to
Bible
School?**

Daniel Sheard

Brief, engaging, and filled with real student advice about why Bible school is a solid choice, *Should I Go to Bible School?* is a must-read for anyone considering next steps in their education.

Where can high school graduates go to learn the scriptures, get exposed to different ministries, and encounter a God who loves them? *Should I Go to Bible School?* answers practical questions, gives advice about the hurdles of leaving the safety of common choices, and paints an exciting picture of what's possible in the amazing future of the young seeker.

Daniel Sheard serves as the Director of Curriculum and a teaching professor at Summit International School of Ministry, the Bible school of Times Square Church founded by David Wilkerson.



Learn more
about Summit:

summitpa.org

717.865.2000
info@summitpa.org



SUMMIT
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF MINISTRY

Should I Go to Bible School?

By Daniel Sheard

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Grantville, PA

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ISBN: 979-8-9900582-0-0

Place of publication: Grantville, PA

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*But seek first the kingdom of God
and his righteousness, and all these
things will be added to you.*

Matthew 6:33

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Foreword: Why I Am Writing This Book

In 1943 at the age of 18, my mother boarded a train in New York City with \$80 in her pocket. She was headed to Providence Bible Institute in Rhode Island. She had more faith than money, not even enough cash to cover tuition.

She believed that God would meet her and rectify many of the things that life had already thrown at her. She was raised by a Christian mother and an abusive, alcoholic father. It was almost forbidden in our house to ask her what her father was like, because the memories were painful.

What I did know about my mother's past was that when she spoke about her years at Providence, it was a time of healing and provided an architectural plan for a lifetime of joy.

Bible school was foundational to her character, implanting an unwavering faith in a God who deeply cared about her as a broken vessel. Although my mother was not perfect and was still working things out until the day she died, she did bring simple, reproducible values into the home, principles that abide with me until this day.

My mother's worldview was formidably shaped by her two years studying the Bible. She lived her entire life in communion with God, read the

scriptures, prayed, and raised children who sought the Lord.

When speaking at my mother's funeral, my father who at the time was 91 years old, rehearsed this step of faith in his very brief testimonial. He said that when he found out she left for Bible school with \$80 to her name, he knew she was a woman of faith and character, and this was one of the reasons he decided to marry her.

Going to Bible school did not stop my mother from continuing her education either. In fact, it stabilized her life with purpose.

After completing two years at Providence Bible Institute, she went on to get her bachelor's degree in English at Taylor University, returned to teach at the Bible Institute 6 years later, and eventually completed her master's degree in library science at Queens College in New York.

It was faith, however, that moved my mother, not education. This priority was something she retained her entire life.

An Argument for Dropping Everything

I am sure that many who read this will think that I am too bold, but it is not an overreach to say that giving a year or two to study the Bible and get things right in life will make the rest of one's journey on earth more productive. We do this in every other domain—engineering, medicine, the humanities,

automotive repair, and on and on. We prepare with skills for effective workplace success.

Yet, when it comes to God's word, we sometimes believe it is a compilation of suggestions from which we can choose. This is something most believers evidence day by day by their lack of attention to scriptural detail. They don't commune with God and reap the consequences of human failures that could have been avoided, had they an understanding of God and His word.

For those who can receive it and who feel led of God, I would say that you should plan to drop everything, move in faith, and send in your application. Once accepted, start reordering your life to raise tuition money, sell what you need to, and prepare mentally for God to visit you in a powerful way.

I have heard several times, in the last few days alone, student comments like this, "I was fearful and doubtful that I should do this (that is to enroll). Even up until the last few days before coming, it was a battle to think of getting in my car. I sometimes said to myself, 'Am I crazy?' I am so glad I did. Now I am free, and God has helped me deal with my past and given me a new vision for the future."

For those who are not called, give this booklet to someone else who might sense God's leading in this direction. If you sense God's tug, however, keep reading. You might be surprised.

Painting a Picture of the Future

Why would you do this? What benefits do you expect out of a one or two-year commitment to Bible school? This is not putting your life on hold. It is grabbing hold of life.

Imagine for a minute what a Summit International School of Ministry graduate looks like. If you look closely, you will see a person who is healed from her wounds, who is ready to live in the blessing of God, and who is confident about God's call on her life.

For ten years I was a Christian school administrator of a thriving, healthy K-12 school in Pennsylvania. When I started examining where our graduates were attending after they left, I noticed the good, the bad, and the ugly about higher education.

For the most part, Bible school students came back to visit us at breaks with smiles on their faces, their faith intact, and were far more emotionally stable and confident than students who went to liberal arts colleges and universities. This was not universally true, but it was far more the rule than the exception. Then typically, they went on in their education and fast tracked with stability and resolve. They were confident but not prideful.

Having a healthy relationship with God and a better understanding of the Bible is foundational to a good start, something more and more difficult to find today. How many young people do you know who

have rock solid values, have a theological framework, know how to live in community in a healthy way, and can pray for more than five minutes without falling asleep?

This book is an argument for a Bible school education, something I never had.

In 1977, I was considering four colleges and universities to attend. One was a Bible school. I filled out the applications to three schools but only mailed in one. I chose a liberal arts college. It was something positive, but it came with a host of values conflicts I would later discover, some of which I would deeply regret.

My education tossed me into a sea of doubt, theological complexity, philosophical dilemmas, and inconsistencies I was not ready to handle. It took me years to recover, and I believe many of those battles were painfully unnecessary. I hope to save some of you from the same fate.

I also believe there are a considerable number of people who need to think their college decisions through and perhaps change their paths. This is not to say that going to a traditional four-year college is a mistake, but people need to know that there are other ways to reach the same end. It is possible to have a healthy education in true Christianity and still be credentialed in other disciplines.

How is a Bible School Different from a Bible College?

A Bible school is not the same thing as a Bible college. There is a different atmosphere. Let me explain.

A Bible school does not grant accredited degrees, but it is completely devoted to spiritual formation and spiritual health. The workload is definitely like a Bible college, but the focus and distribution of time is quite different.

Our students are taught to be in the presence of God through worship and Bible study, gaining victory over personal issues and advancing spiritually in the reality of who they are in Christ. When students grow close to Him, they learn how His victory becomes their spiritual victory.

Summit International School of Ministry in Grantville, Pennsylvania, does many things differently than other Christian higher education institutions. In the next few pages, I hope to capture some of the best reasons to enroll in a Bible school.

There is a cost, however, and for those called in this direction, the price is small compared to the infinite and eternal return on the investment.

1 The Parable of Four High School Graduates

At a certain high school, there were four friends, Matthew, Mark, Luly, and John who were considering what to do after they graduated. All four scoured the Internet to find a way forward.

Matthew decided to go to a secular university, SecU, a big school with a good football team. He spent four years there, living in the dorm. During his time on campus, he struggled with his faith, even though he was part of a Christian club on campus. He had doubts about the origins of the universe and his place in it.

Like many university students, he was exposed to all things sexual, drinking parties, and endless experimentation. He finished his degree and moved out into the workforce, getting a good job, but struggling with what he heard, saw, and experienced over those four years. He took the memories into his marriage and home life. His past experiences were difficult to shake. He did not have the grounding in the scriptures he would have liked. He did not really have a theological framework, and his ministry experience was limited. His church involvement faltered for a number of years.

Mark moved along to that famous school, Christian University, where he received a good liberal arts education. He ended up with more of an

understanding of the Bible, but his theology was piecemeal. Mark took classes from Christian professors, but they all believed something different. He also was introduced to many competing philosophies and doctrines that were not the same as what he learned as a child. He saw many Christians who were not serious. Some were from the local area and chose the school because it was close geographically. Others were from Christian homes but did not have any real interest in the Christian faith. Mark graduated and got a good job. He married someone with a similar experience to his own. He carried his theological ambiguities forward and was involved in his home church. He never really learned at university how to lead someone to Christ or to disciple them, so he spent a number of years working these things out along with his wife, who had similar issues.

Luly really struggled with her next steps and ultimately decided to go to a Bible school. She grew up in a nominal Christian family. Her parents did not really understand her choice, but she felt she needed to get her theology right before she moved out into the workforce or even on to more college training. She arrived honestly and openly to campus with her bundle of wounds, things she had seen and heard during her teen years. She immediately entered a culture of worship, prayer, and biblical studies. Along with her courses which were taught by instructors totally committed to a biblical lifestyle, she learned

her positive identity in Christ as well as the powerful work of the Holy Spirit to cleanse and enable her to move forward. She started to heal inside.

She found her sharp intellect emerging out of her new purity, and she became confident to speak about spiritual matters. She discovered her spiritual gifts and started to minister to other students and people she did not even know, while students were out on external trips to churches and parachurch ministries. Luly finished Bible school and went out into the workforce. She got credentialed in technology, got married, and raised a solid Christian family in the local church, where she became a leader, occasionally speaking and serving on the board of elders. She provided solid leadership to the pastor and other folks in the church and carried the church vision forward with boldness.

John had a very similar experience to Luly. However, John decided to get his two-year, associate's degree at Bible school and go to Christian university after he finished. He did not lose any years of university training by going to Bible school, but simply spent two more years doing advanced study for his BA. Also, when he was thrown into endless debates of gender values, doctrinal disputes, and values conflicts, John had already worked many of these things out. Additionally, he had a sense of what spiritual deliverance looked like. He himself was freed from many of life's confusions. He knew that arguments were not the same as spiritual power. He

had a history of watching people be changed by the Holy Spirit of God, almost on a daily basis in class, in prayer meetings, and in worship service invitations.

This picture stayed with him the rest of his life and became a model of spiritual health that he advanced in his family and in the church he joined after graduation. He took his Bible training with him, along with a decisive personal confidence that God had given him for leadership.

He mentored many believers for the next 50 years, and countless people were grateful for his decisive modeling and discipleship training. Those people, in turn, trained others. In a sense, he himself became like a Bible school teacher for the many friends who never had a chance to get the training he had.

2 Beauty for Ashes, Joy for Heaviness, and Faith for Doubt

Let's face it. Growing up in a postmodern culture is brutal. It wounds people. Between broken homes, abuses, cell phone use, access to substances, and countless other dangers, it is hard to stay spiritually healthy.

How does God heal in Bible school, and how is that different than any other approach to life for a young teenager? Let's look at some solid reasons.

The Power of the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus appeared on the scene, John the Baptist told us what Jesus would do when He appeared. "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Mt. 3:11).

Jesus was not just about teaching in parables. He came to bring the Spirit of God with both power and judgment.

Bible school is not an easy place because there is the constant self-evaluation that comes with examining one's character, but He gives us His Spirit to work things out. The result is a Divinely empowered person who knows the character of God.

Spiritual and Emotional Health

“I am the LORD, your healer” (Ex. 15:26). This is the promise God made to people who live His word.

Where are young people to go to get healthy today? The locker room? The basement of their friend’s house? Social media platforms?

The wreckage and imbalance that is generated by countless movies, media compromises, and relational turmoil ultimately create a vessel that needs to get healthy, both spiritually and emotionally. Bible school is a place for that to happen.

Some Bible schools are more academic but have lost the mandate of spirit-restoration. It is very difficult to advance in life with broken bones that were never reset.

Sustained questioning of past mistakes, of values, and of habits leads to the inevitable crying out to God for restoration. Churches may or may not enter this extensive process. It is, however, the job of the Bible school whose purpose is to bring others to God.

Healing from Wounds and Deliverance from Demons

When there is trash piling up in the kitchen, we need to take it out, or it starts to stink. The same can be said for the human spirit, but this takes time. It is not a one-week process.

Recently, I was in a class lecturing on the story of Lot and his daughters' rape of their father. It is one of the most bizarre accounts in the Bible. As I ventured into the implications of sexual exploitation, drunkenness, scheming, and other applications from the story, the faces of the students showed what I believed was always there—deep wounds.

People experiment. People are led astray. People are taken advantage of. Life is filled with wreckage. Who will help these young people know God's way forward when their pasts are littered with rubble?

A Bible school has a mandate: it is to bring students through a spiritual and emotional healing.

Freedom and Optimism

Freedom is the natural result of healing. I remember when I ruptured a disc in my back in 2005. The following morning, I rolled out of bed onto the floor. I could not walk.

I was operated on a few days later. There was instant relief. I was free to walk. My decisive pessimism was also instantly converted to optimism. I looked at the future differently.

Bible school can be a place of healing and of reversing circumstances. Our future is shaped by what God says about us and not what we have already lived.

Supernatural Faith Perspective

Once a person is healed and headed in the right direction, the future becomes filled with possibilities. What was once a distant possibility is now close and accessible. What was once impossible is now just around the corner.

When God is alive in a person's life, a desired future is within reach. Additionally, the extraordinary life is not something other people live; it is something that God has personally designed for me and you.

People often read certain Bible verses with a great deal of skepticism. Take for example Luke 18:27, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." Yet, when we spend time in the scriptures, our perspective begins to change.

It should be within our framework to expect that "all things are possible for one who believes" (Mk. 9:23). The Word of God teaches us to function by kingdom possibilities and not with human eyes.

What is lost to the young person, or for that matter, stolen by sinful humanity, can be restored. People do have the ability to believe again for something impossible.

A Remedy of Joy

Joy is a product of the healthy life. It is part of being truly spiritual.

One thing that happens at the Bible school where I teach is that people come in with twisted and tormented faces. Their eyes are downcast. They slump around for weeks and months in the weight of past sins.

The transformation does not take long, however. Within months or sometimes even weeks, students are delivered from the guilt and condemnation of past sins. The joy is remarkable.

Hardly a day goes by in my life when I don't visibly see the change of countenance. That student who was formerly broken and crushed becomes transformed by the power of the Spirit of the living God.

3 A New Picture of God

Because many young people have not been trained theologically or been disciplined in their home churches, they need time to carefully develop an accurate view of God, and with that, the wonderful possibilities of immense proportions. Living in God's presence is full of joy (Ps. 16:11).

A true understanding of the God of the universe moves people from warped, oppressive views of the Father to an engagement with a dynamic and thoughtful Father who has solid plans of peace and hope. Living in that reality calms the heart and allows a person to gain perspective or make decisions that are sound and biblical.

When I was a missionary in the Caribbean, we had our first meeting with a fledgling group who wanted to start something new in the region. I opened the meeting and said, "It seems that God has brought Sue and I to you. What is He doing?"

"I have been a Christian for six years," David said. "No one has ever taught me the fundamentals. Will you do that?"

I was touched deeply. All I ever wanted was for someone to ask me this question. It is the question Christians should be asking. What do I need to know to have a solid Christian life built on an unshakable foundation? Paul was pretty clear about this:

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:11-15)

It is time to lay a foundation and start building. It may involve removing the crutches on which you have been leaning. Is Christ really your foundation? Do you wake up in the power of the Spirit, knowing that you are building with gold, silver, and precious stones?

Our lives are filled with carefully-laid substitute foundations: money, friends, job, ambition, hobbies, and sports. These are things into which we invest. They are our precarious and human superstructure, so to speak.

Some of you are thinking. "But I need a degree. What about financial aid? How will I make

money?" Others of you might be a little older and established, wondering what you will do about your material assets if you go to Bible school.

The reality is that when you think about the return on your investment over the years, it is quite meager. It has not yielded the fruit you thought it might.

Why not magnify God in your life and see the results? Devote yourself to getting a clear view of the goodness of God, and you might be surprised about the returns on that investment.

Almost universally, students who get to know God in His fullness look at the world differently. Suddenly, the world looks open. God grants us a piece of His creation. We are stewards of immense proportions.

Living Eternal Covenant Love

The New Covenant brought with it a blood-purchased bond. Christ's love was expressed in total resolve for you. He desires for you to succeed in life and truly fulfill His calling for your future.

What this means is that whatever your prior thoughts have been concerning the extent of God's interest in you, you need to magnify this infinitely. Whatever your sin, whatever your mistakes, whatever your failure, God has you covered. He has covered this. "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom. 5:20).

Imagine living without guilt and without the nagging pain of unfortunate consequences. This is the life Christ wants you to live.

Do you know how to live in that covenant love? That is our job at Summit International School of Ministry.

You are probably saying, “That is too good to be true. You mean I can be free from this weight?” Yes, that is possible. You may need a coach to help you get there. Sometimes there is a distance between the theory of freedom and its reality for you. It is possible, however. It may be closer than you think.

4 Values Worth Living

A very brave student told me something shocking recently. She said, "I wanted to face the truth. I needed a safe place to do that." Imagine someone willing to admit and see not only reality the way it is but also live with optimism after a retooling.

It is not easy to take a good look at ourselves, but even if it is hard, we know that relinquishment of a life of disappointment is not hard to let go of. We all live a life of acquired values and habits that we drank in from those around us. On top of that, we add a few mistakes of our own.

Looking at a value system that is more or less watered down can be the first step in rebuilding. We cannot be cured from cancer without a doctor first telling us we have it. I would rather live the rest of my life cancer-free, enjoying the fullness of life, than constantly bemoaning the fact that I am sick.

The beginning of change is diagnosing and deciding what to do about it. The rest of life is delighting in all that God has for us.

Mind you, there are spiritual disciplines involved in being a *disciple*, but it is in joy that we move forward, not in obligation. None of us should make the tragic mistake of assuming that our current value system will change if we just move forward. Rather, we need time to radically rebuild and focus on the voice of God through His word.

5 Loving the Bible

If the Bible is the word of God, it should be our life. This is what Jesus told us in Matthew 4:4, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Yet, so many more things consume us. We live by the television schedule, employment hours, meal expectations, and a host of other pressing needs. Jesus told us that our real need, even more than food, is to live by the word that comes from God’s mouth.

We need a new reality in our lives, one that is infused with the scriptures. “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63).

Often believers in Christ know this and repeat it. Yet, the reality is that we don’t live this, but we must.

The Timeline of God

It is imperative that we learn the scriptures from beginning to end. Only then can we know where we fit on God’s journey.

The tapestry is His, and He is painting the canvas. Biblical content teaches us how God works, and for that matter, how He does not work. When we

know the scriptures, we are able to weigh decisions and move in the Spirit more easily.

Theology and Apologetics

There are significant side benefits to knowing the scriptures. We are able to give an answer to people. Peter tells us that we should be ready always to give defense to any man that asks us about our hope (1 Pet. 3:15).

Few things are more embarrassing than being asked a simple question and not having the answer, especially as it pertains to our faith. We profess on the one hand that it is the most important thing in our lives, but don't spend adequate time on what we say we value. We need to live not only with hope but also with answers.

People are looking to construct a foundation for living a healthy life. They don't want pretension or smokescreens. They want hope. We must have heaven-sent answers.

6 A Bible-Centered Community and a Safe Place to Ask Questions

There is nothing more amazing than a healthy community. However, when you put a group of sinners together, there is bound to be conflict.

Can I live with my brothers and sisters in Christ with love and care? It perhaps is a simple question, but the answers are not simple.

We all need healthy role models. We need time to observe others who are having some success in life and who know how to navigate. Bible school is a place to do that.

Bible school communities are different in that there are groups of people who are serious about living a common ambition to absorb the scriptures, praise the Lord together, and allow God to file off the rough edges.

Living and studying that common ambition is the intent at Summit. Infused with praise every day, one can learn to sing to a God with others who are gathered around a shared purpose.

Imagine praying with students on a regular, almost daily basis. When we live a life of transparency, we construct a church model that is not program-centered. God is in the middle, and we His people are circled around Him.

Asking Questions in the Right Order

It's a refreshing thing to hear someone ask questions about the Bible or articulate how they are trying to discover God's hand in life. Where is God at work, and how can I join Him?

In the same way that there are safe people or safe places to ask questions, there is also a helpful order in which we should ask them.

For example, we might ask, "How can I use a circular saw?" before we ask, "How can I build an addition on my house?" Many people wrongly take up questions prematurely. They want to build a house before they know how to use the saw.

We probably don't need to ask where we can go as missionaries before we ask how to have a healthy prayer life. We need to ask questions about how to model godliness before getting married. Discussions about spiritual gifts logically follow after we have a healthy identity in Christ.

It may seem offensive to say that not all questions are healthy, but that is exactly what I am saying. A young man does not take a young lady out on a date and start probing into old boyfriends. It might be better to ask if she wants to go to Olive Garden or Outback Steakhouse.

There is a certain prudence that comes with asking the right questions first. I wish I could turn back the clock at so many places in my life and ask the right questions first.

7 A Place of Ministry Practice

Every learner needs a safe place to fail. When a child turns one year old, s/he learns to walk. We remove the sharp table-edges. We child-proof the cupboards. We hold the hand to steady the wobbly legs before the inevitable wipeout.

Success follows failure. That is simply the way it is. Many people do not risk doing ministry because they are afraid to fail. Probably, they know they *will fail*.

This is nothing from which we should be ashamed or shy away. The Prodigal Son runs to the father after his failure. A Bible school is a safe-zone, riddled with the best kind of failure possible, the failure that precedes the great works of God.

Success is right around the corner. Being young can be a painful thing. We fall and rise and then fall and rise again. It is a given that relationships and ministry attempts are likely to be sprinkled with some failure. However, power is right around the corner.

Over and over again, I see students at Summit who grow in confidence and who learn to succeed. They leave the school optimistic because they have been loved as they climbed the ladder from failure to victory.

There is a clear difference between healthy and unhealthy risk. I might let a young mechanic change my oil, but I don't want him working on my

transmission or diagnosing electronic failures in one of the many computers in my car.

We all grow into success through practice.
This is the role of a Bible school.

8 Optimism about the Future

When you picture the final product of what your best life might look like, what is that? Is that product about you or about *them*?

How do we dock our ship in the port of contentment? How do we get to living a truly valuable and productive life? What does the ideal future look like?

Living for the Benefit of Others

Living in grace and not in failure is only the beginning. Ultimately, I should be empowered to live for God and people.

There is a decisive refocusing that happens when we desire the word of God. It can sometimes be painful if we have been living for ourselves. However, I have found that people who say they have no energy to live for others have not been touched by the hand of God. Once they are, an external focus becomes meaningful and possible.

There is a reprioritizing that comes with biblical understanding. God gives us reason and motivation to embrace something that formerly may not have been possible.

Ministry is ultimately about others. Carter Conlon, General Overseer at Times Square Church, is fond of quoting Luke 4:18-19, when talking about the personal anointing of Jesus' ministry.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to
proclaim good news to the poor. He
has sent me to proclaim liberty to
the captives and recovering of sight
to the blind, to set at liberty those
who are oppressed, to proclaim the
year of the Lord's favor.

It is all about others—the poor, the captives,
the blind, and the oppressed. Ministry is not a head-
trip or a voyage to personal fulfillment. We get
personal fulfillment when we see God using us in
unique and powerful ways.

Essentially, we need to see how much God
cares about others and what is involved in joining Him
in ministry. He is at work, and we are delighted to be
involved in His plan.

I remember my first woodworking project
with my father. We built a chessboard together. I cut
little pieces of wood with him and learned how to do
woodworking. However, from his vantage point, he
was launching a ship, not creating a feel-good
experience for himself. The aim was to start teaching
me, so I could build my own projects, which I do to
this day.

When we embark into ministry, we see the
life that God might have for others. We picture how
they too might walk with God in freedom and grace.

This is the call of God on all of us, to find our place in the body of Christ for the joy of the Kingdom and to build a powerful church.

Love that Conquers Fear

We tend to recoil in the face of an unknown future. Will I be able to get a job? How can I support my family? Will there be a war? Am I ready for marriage?

These and a thousand other questions can cripple us, but God wants more. He wants us to know that He controls the future. He gives us the Holy Spirit and a certain authority over apprehension.

Once our vision is clarified and we are prepared, a powerful and active love kicks in. We will no longer be reactive but pro-active. We are no longer crippled by the thoughts of an unclear future. We know confidently that God is a Good Shepherd. He gave His life for the sheep. He will lead us personally and vocationally.

The inner stresses of conflict are pacified, and we will be able to move forward and return home with optimism. When we know God, we can create culture, rather than being subject to the destructive forces of the culture imposed on us.

A Heart for the World

David prayed in Psalm 119:32 that God would “enlarge his heart.” How big might your heart be?

Jesus told His disciples after three years of Bible school with Him to, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19). This vision appears four other times in the scriptures (Mk. 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Three years earlier, this was unimaginable to the fishermen with their calloused hands or Matthew in his tax booth. Yet, God had a fantastic plan. They dropped their nets and followed Him.

Typically, most of us have enough to do worrying about ourselves. We would be happy if we could just get our lives right, let alone someone else’s. However, God has bigger plans for you.

He sees your health as a platform for others. What that looks like might be unimaginable to you now, for any of a thousand reasons. However, God has big plans, plans that reach out into the four corners of the earth. They even reach into eternity.

Look at what God reminds us about through Paul:

What no eye has seen, nor ear
heard, nor the heart of man
imagined, what God has prepared
for those who love him— these
things God has revealed to us

through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (1 Cor. 2:9-10)

There is the fantastic life ahead of you that the Spirit of the living God has already searched out. Bible school is only the first step forward into a greater and wider life in this world and in God's kingdom.

If I gave you the keys to my car, the keys don't get you where you want to go. They only get the motor started.

Where are you headed? Do you believe that God can replace ashes with beauty, joy for heaviness, and faith for doubt? There is a new picture of God waiting for you, one that is built on the foundation of a biblical value system. There is a safe place of community, where you can ask questions and venture out into ministry. Come join us on this journey!

9 Real Questions and Solid Answers

1. **What will my family and friends think?** What will they say? I can hear them now, “What is a Bible school?” “What about your career?” “Aren’t you delaying your future?” “I thought you loved your church?” The Bible is clear that we should not have a fear of people. “A person’s fear sets a trap for him, but one who trusts the LORD is safe” (Proverbs 29:25). It may be that your first step in a life of amazing faith is that you stop following the advice of people when God calls you to greater things. Often the people who are giving us advice are those who, when you look at their lives, don’t aspire to a walk with Christ, persist in righteous living, strive for clean consciences, and live at peace. Isaiah was even more direct and told us that we should, “Stop trusting people. Their life is in their nostrils” (Isaiah 2:22).
2. **What if I don’t have enough money for school?** It does not matter where you go to school, there is often not enough money. The thing about going to a Bible school is that God assists those who seek Him. Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission, said, “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply.” The Apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:19 that, “God will

richly fill your every need in a glorious way through Christ Jesus.” You have yet to see the amazing things God will do to get you where He wants you.

- 3. Why would I leave my current situation?** You might be saying, “I’m stable and settled in. Besides, I have a fear of change. I am not sure I want to leave my family.” In the scriptures, God called people to pursue Him, not security. If God were interested in short-term stability, He never would have called Abraham to leave family and country. He would not have asked Noah to take on a monumental vision that would be immensely costly. God would not have asked prophets to speak on his behalf or Daniel to stand against the king’s command. Jesus would never have asked the disciples to drop their nets. Paul was told that God would send him far away to mission work among the Gentiles. If God calls you to stay, surely stay. However, if God wants you to spend a year or two seeking Him, your life will never be the same. You will rise to heights you never dreamed were possible. Don’t let the idea of human stability keep you from what might be the best decision of your life. Spiritual maturity is far more important.

4. **Will I fit in and make friends? What are people like there? Will God really work for me?** In any decision, there is the fear of the unknown, but by making a move to a small Bible school, one thing is sure: there is a tight-knit community. Even if you are a foreigner and afraid of the cultural differences, you will find that there are a group of staff that love you and will help you through the cultural adjustments. Most students at Summit make lifelong friendships. It is a safe place to work through struggles with others who are processing similar questions.

5. **My life is a mess, and you don't know me. People are telling me I am running away from things.** Isn't this the very reason you should consider Bible school? You are running TO something not AWAY from something. Christ is the only foundation, and knowing the scriptures is the way to Christian maturity and stability. Imagine yourself on the other side of two years of spiritual training. You will undergo cleansing, learn to get things right in your life, experience what it means to serve, and maybe become the leader God wants you to become. You will have optimism about the future and most likely gain clarity about where God wants you to go in life. Many who go to Bible school do so because they

need to hear from God and be healed. Spiritual and emotional health is right around the corner.

6. **Is it wrong that I have some pride about needing to get things right and am embarrassed about answering truthfully about needing help?** The unpleasant issue of hopelessness in a current situation can bring shame, but often students choose a Bible school to be freed from that feeling of unworthiness. We live in a fallen world where we do things that make us ashamed. Making the move to go to Bible school is humbling, but what is so shameful about the truth? Why not tell people, “I need to take a year or two to get some things right in my life. I have some spiritual deficiencies that I need to address.” Most people will respect this. Society says that concealing weakness and sin is normal. The Bible encourages us to confess and forsake it. If we do, we find the mercy of God (Proverbs 28:13).

Why Summit International School of Ministry?

Recently, we sent out a short survey to our current students and some alumni asking them a few simple questions about their thoughts BEFORE coming to Summit. We also asked them about their

greatest hope(s) or dream(s) that drove them forward to follow through and come, despite barriers. Here are some of their answers, with slight modifications for readability.

- “I had a vision God was preparing me to be a warrior, to make me into everything I am supposed to be in Him.”
- “God spoke to me. God called me. God met me. God promised me.”
- “I was inspired to dedicate a season of my life for future fruitfulness, to walk closely with God, experience Him, and grow deep in His word.”
- “I wanted to receive a revelation, live the truth, and get a biblical education so I could be effective in ministry.”
- “I came to draw closer to God and receive a clarified purpose. It was my desire to rest in his love for me and see His face.”
- “I came for the anointing and boldness in ministry that I saw in David Wilkerson and the Conlons.”
- “I have a passion for ministry and want to bring people to God. I thought I needed to be equipped with the knowledge of Him first to be effective.”

- “I needed healing, Christian community, to get away from my phone, and get spiritually unstuck.”
- “I hoped that I might get the opportunity to intern or somehow get connected to a missions organization.”
- “I didn't have much hope left. Summit was my only hope to escape fleshly desires.”
- “There was the desire to end a life of disobedience, erase a bad thought life, and turn from being selfish.”
- “I wanted to become what I need to in order to make an impact in my family and in my country.”
- “I came to escape the monotony and futility of my treadmill.”

False Perceptions of Bible School

In our survey of current students and alumni, we also asked them to address prior false perceptions and what they might say to a potential person thinking about making the commitment to come to Summit. Here are some of their responses about those prior false perceptions.

- “I had wrong perceptions of authority based on previous experiences. The staff are here for your betterment. They actually care about

you. It's authority I can actually look up to and respect.”

- “I thought everyone who comes here is like a Bible scholar or has been following the Lord for years and years.”
- “I thought Summit didn't really go out at all. I thought we stayed on campus all the time and didn't really do much outreach.”
- “Summit is not ‘magical.’ It is neither the place nor the people here can do in you what only God can do. How one responds to the Holy Spirit's activity is so important. One can have all the right factors, but if a heart is not submitted to God, transformation cannot occur.”
- “I thought that I would fail academically. I also thought being unplugged would be really challenging, when in reality it wasn't hard at all.”

What do our current students want to say to future applicants?

- “Pray and ask the Lord if this is the place for them. I would also tell them to take a step of faith just like I did.”
- “I would tell them that if God is nudging them to go, do it. It is such an incredible foundation for the rest of your life to give God one or two

years before moving on to make very important life-long decisions. It prioritizes God and sets Him as the foundation of your life.”

- “Come. It's a school for every walk of life. Money, work, and schooling can wait. Draw close to Jesus and the rest will follow. If you're waiting for the ‘perfect’ time to come, you'll be waiting forever. If you are concerned with material needs, you have to understand that God sees that you are giving these 2 years to simply seek Him, so why wouldn't He bless your future?”
- “Summit literally changes the way I view God and what ministry is. Most importantly, Summit equips us not only with the knowledge of God but also feeds our spiritual lives.”
- “Summit challenged my preconceived notions about Bible schools. I discovered a supportive community that encourages growth and diverse perspectives.”
- “Coming to Summit is one of the best things you can do for your spiritual, emotional, and mental health/growth. Regardless of what you do with your life, you will benefit from what Summit has to offer.”
- “Be ready for the Lord to deal with your problems there. When you get there, God will be wanting twice as much to deal with the

deep roots and issues in your life and heal them. Sanctification is messy sometimes, but it is a perfect place for the Lord to really sanctify you.”

- “Remember you are there for the Lord's presence and for Him to speak to you through the pastors and students around you.”
- “If you are ready to dive deep into ALL of who God is, know your God-given identity and walk in the call that Christ has, come to this place. God has challenged me in places that I didn't realize were problems.”
- “Giving up your phone and going unplugged is the best decision you will ever make. Here at Summit, you learn how to structure yourself in a way that creates beneficial lifelong habits, and not having your phone makes it even more impactful.”
- “Summit is the right place to have an encounter with tutors [professors] and pastors who are led by the spirit to help you grow your spiritual walk with God and equip you for ministry.”
- “This is a place where you can listen to God's deep and pure word without any distractions.”
- “Don't let the fear and doubts win over you but let the Lord win over them.”
- “It will change your life for the better and push you into becoming the person God

created you to be. Summit truly saved my life and gave me the hope and love I was always looking for in Christ.”

- “Get over yourself and take that step that puts God first and all that you want last.”
- “Be prepared for the sifting of God. It hurts, but it's so worth it. The fruit that comes from it is truly something that you could never have gotten from anywhere else.”
- “If this is just a school you're looking at and weighing between your options, come at your own risk, because it's demanding. However, if the Lord is calling you here specifically, do NOT say ‘no.’”
- “There may be no place like it on earth, and if only there were more. It would be a completely different world out there.”
- “I would definitely recommend that you go to Summit. It will stretch you and bring you out of your comfort zone for sure, but it has made me more confident in who I am as a believer. Summit-living has also allowed me to have a time of growth, with God as my only focus. I have also made some very close friends from here, knowing that they are serious about their spiritual walk with the Lord and want to grow to one day be like Him. This was the best decision I have made in my life.”

- “Pray, and trust what the Lord is leading you to; that small whisper in your spirit is worth the risk!”

The presence of the Lord is on this campus. That spiritual empowerment is where our help comes from. We hope this booklet has helped you gain some insight about Bible school, and we are ready to answer any questions about whether Summit is in your future! Our contact information and web information are on the back cover.

About the Author



Daniel Sheard is Professor of Preaching and Director of Curriculum at Summit International School of Ministry, in Grantville, Pennsylvania, a ministry of Times Square Church. He is a graduate of Spurgeon's College in London. He maintains a personal web site that can be found at:
<https://thepreacherscoach.com/>

Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD;
his going out is sure as the dawn;
he will come to us as the showers,
as the spring rains that water the earth.

Hosea 6:3