

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY--Houston, Texas

PT5375-H1 PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION

Professor: Dr. Kyle Cunningham

January 29-30 (Friday, 3:00-9:30 pm; Saturday, 9:00 am-3:30 pm)

Description

This intensive seminar offers a concentrated theological and practical investigation into the doctrine of Christian growth. Moving systematically from the character of God to the experiential life of the believer, the course is built upon four foundational pillars: the absolute holiness of God, the sobering reality of indwelling sin, the gospel architecture of sanctification, and the dynamic life of walking in the Spirit.

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to help students internalize that personal sanctification is a vital, supernatural work rooted in union with Christ and fueled by the power of the gospel, while equipping students to cultivate a Spirit-led pursuit of holiness in their own lives and ministries.

Objectives

1. To understand and articulate the doctrine of sanctification in Christ.
2. To grow in appreciation of the Father renewing His people in the image of His Son through the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. To understand the Holy Spirit's use of the church and the ordinary means of grace for personal growth in Christ.
4. To gain resources for cultivating growth in holiness and grasp the importance of pursuing holiness for Christian ministry.

Required Texts:

Bridges, Jerry. *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2016.

Chalmers, Thomas. *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*.

<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/Chalmers,%20Thomas%20-%20The%20Expulsive%20Power%20of%20a%20New%20Af.pdf>

Duncan, J. Ligon. "The Ordinary Means of Growth." *Tabletalk*, October 1, 2007.

<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/ordinary-means-growth>

Goodwin, Thomas. *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth in Modern English*. Updated Works, 2024. <https://updatedworks.com/books/the-heart-of-christ-in-heaven-modern-translation/>.

Henry, Matthew. *A Method for Prayer*. Any unabridged edition.

Marshall, Walter. *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification in Modern English*. Updated Works, 2024.
<https://updatedworks.com/books/gospel-mystery-of-sanctification-modern-translation/>

Ryle, J. C. *Holiness*. Unabridged edition.

Schwanda, Tom. "Growing in Christ: Glorifying and Enjoying God through Reformed Spiritual Disciplines." *Reformation & Revival* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 19–45.
https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ref-rev/10-1/10-1_schwanda.pdf

Smith, James K. A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016.

Sproul, R. C. *The Holiness of God*. Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing.

Spurgeon, C. H. *Lectures to My Students*. Unabridged edition.

Westminster Assembly. *The Westminster Confession of Faith; the Shorter and Larger Catechisms*.

Assignments and Grading (All assignments are due in my inbox on February 15, 2027, end of day)

1. Assigned readings and reflection papers (20%): Students will report an estimated percentage of required reading completed and compose two 300-word personal reflection papers, one for each day's required reading assignments. Students may write on any aspect or concept from the readings to show engagement with and reflection on the material.

2. Preaching series (30%): Students will architect a 4-week expository sermon series to help a local church (hypothetical or real) be refreshed and energized for growth towards personal sanctification. Include general outlines for the 4 sermons, including primary and supporting texts, each sermon's "big idea," and any theological paradigms, pillars or themes that may inform intended life application and impact.

3. Final paper (50%): Each student will write a 1500 word paper (6 double-spaced pages) on how personal sanctification is intrinsic to and essential for fruitfulness in an area of life or ministry. Topics will be selected in communication with the professor and come from the following list:

- Personal sanctification and missions.
- Personal sanctification and marriage.
- Personal sanctification and parenting.
- Personal sanctification and prayer.
- Personal sanctification and preaching.
- Personal sanctification and financial management.
- Personal sanctification and the elder office.

- Personal sanctification and the deacon office.
- Personal sanctification and bivocational ministry.
- Personal sanctification and marketplace ministry.
- Personal sanctification and leadership.
- Personal sanctification and followership.

The paper should be formatted according to Turabian. Detailed instructions will be provided in class.

****Again, all assignments are due in my sojourner21@protonmail.com inbox by February 15, 2027, end of day****

Course Outline

Session	Focus	Major Topics and Required Readings
1	The Holiness of God	The <i>Trisagion</i> (Sproul, Chapter 2) God's Holiness: Transcendent Majesty (Sproul, Chapter 3-4) God's Holiness: Moral Purity (Sproul, Chapter 3-4) Holiness: Our calling (WCF, Chapters 2 and 13)
2	The Reality of Indwelling Sin	Sin and the believer (Bridges, Chapters 5-7, 9) The Foundational Problem (Ryle, Chapters 1-4) Sin and the Minister (Spurgeon, Chapter 1)
3	Gospel-driven Sanctification	Union with Christ (Marshall, Chapters 2-3, 10-11) The Heart of Christ (Goodwin, all chapters) The New Affection (Chalmers, all pages)
4	Walking in the Spirit	Desire and holiness (Smith, Chapters 1-4) The Ordinary Means (Duncan, all pages) Growing in Christ (Schwanda, all pages) The Method for Prayer (Henry, "To the Readers" and Chapter 1) The Minister in Prayer (Spurgeon, Chapter 3)

Supplementary Bibliography

Edwards, Jonathan. *The Religious Affections*.

Grant, Jonathan. "The Hypersexual Self: Sex and Relationships as Happiness Technologies" and "Churches without Steeples: The Loss of Transcendence and the Atomistic Worldview" (Chs. 5–6). In *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hypersexualized Age*, 96–130. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015.

Lewis, CS. *Screwtape Letters*.

Murray, Andrew. *Humility*.

Owen, John. *The Mortification of Sin*.

Contacting the Instructor

Please contact the instructor by email at sojourner21@protonmail.com with "RTS course" in the subject line.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Personal Sanctification
Professor: Dr. Kyle Cunningham
Campus: Houston
Date: Spring 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i>		<u>Rubric</u> ☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Minimal ☐ None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Assignments require careful articulation of complex truths based on assigned reading of theologically robust content.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	Careful treatment of scripture runs throughout this course, though we will be leaning heavily on the interpretive understandings of past theologians.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	All required reading aligns with reformed perspectives; WCF is included in required readings.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	This is the central thrust of the course.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	The renovation of personal desire toward our triune God is a central theme in the course.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	The course approach assumes a flight from sectarian pride and a primary emphasis on grace, personal humility and awareness of one's own brokenness.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Major assignment is to envision and architect a preaching series on personal sanctification.

Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	Corporate worship is less of a focus of the course, but the sacraments will be part of our class discussion.
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Strong	Required readings and one of the assignments focus on the local church, including missions.
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	Consideration and discussion on primary cultural trends and narratives that threaten personal holiness.