

WHY SEMINARY?

As you read, we hope you'll consider these questions in the spirit with which they're intended: genuine concern for you as a whole person going through graduate theological education. Your life doesn't stop at the classroom door, and your studies don't stop at the kitchen table.

We love welcoming new students into Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Charlotte, but we are even more excited to watch you walk across the stage and get your degree. Investing your time and attention to these questions now will help you persevere as you follow our Lord's calling in your life.

We encourage you to consider finances, location, climate, support systems, relationships, goals, and more in the discernment process. Each member of the Admissions team has graduated, or is on the way to graduating, from seminary, so we are very familiar with the joys and challenges of graduate theological education. We are more than happy to talk through your questions with you!

LET'S GET STARTED



Questions to discern if seminary is the path for you.

WHICH SEMINARY?



Things to consider when considering specific seminaries.

WHO DO YOU KNOW?



As the poet said, no one is an island. Bring your team with you.

SQUAD GOALS



Eyes on the prize, run the race: persevering to graduation, and beyond.

WHY SEMINARY?

Let's Get Started

- What do you want to study?
- Why do you want to study?
- How will this increase your skill-set in a given area?

These are all good questions for anyone considering further education, whether it's undergraduate, graduate, or doctorate studies. You need to know your interests and motivations, and you need to know how you can utilize it for financial support.

If you don't have the time (or the financial means) right now, we offer several options you may find valuable: audit courses at our Charlotte campus for a small fee; or, start with our Certificate in Christian Studies, and take advantage of our Tuition Payment Plan to pay as you go.

And specifically, for a seminary education, there's also another significant question to consider:

- Has God called you to it?

Not everyone has the sense of a distinct call. For some, it's just a persistent desire. But this is a question worth asking of yourself, and of those who know you well.

Which Seminary?

So you really want to be a biblical scholar and professor, or the next great theologian, or the best pastor you can be of the church God gives you. Wonderful! Let's talk through some further questions.

- Do you want to study the Old Testament? The New Testament? Do you want to study the original languages?
- Does your heart beat for theology? Do you love figuring out what it means for us right here, right now?
- Do you want to integrate biblical and theological studies with another discipline like teaching, psychology, or music?
- Do you absolutely need to study Greek and Hebrew to get where you need to go, or can you use language tools and English translations?

- If you're female, how much support do you need in your seminary career? Do you want an environment that affirms you in your ministerial vocation?

Here's some other things to consider:

- Warm or cool climate?
- Urban or rural setting?
- Large or small campus?
- Denominational or non-denominational school?
- Theologically "conservative" or "liberal" environment?
- Cost of living and quality of life?
- Work your way through or live off loans? Do you already have financial debt?

Gordon-Conwell's Partnership Program is a great option to help you get through seminary with as little debt as possible.

Every seminary affirms and attempts living within the complimentary values of teaching truth and loving well. Things being as they are, each seminary does this inconsistently and imperfectly, though in grace we keep trying. So, while a seminary may say they provide the sum of those two, every school tends toward one side of the equation or the other.

How this often works out on the truth-teaching side is an academically rigorous, systematic, and intellectual education that prepares you to exegete, exposit, and expound from the pulpit, but can sometimes miss the connection to the person in the pew (or desk).

How it often works out on the loving-well side is an education that provides ample opportunities and models for you to work in the community, and be the hands and feet in the world that Christ calls us to be, but sometimes text and doctrine get dismissed as too dry or "irrelevant."

Do you want an environment that primarily challenges you academically, or practically? These are not mutually exclusive categories, but are you prepared to expend some extra effort to balance them together in your life and ministry? (This effort will continue beyond seminary, actually.)

WHY SEMINARY?

Who Do You Know?

There are also some larger questions to ask yourself regarding life stages and support systems. The dynamics you already engage in your relationships and circumstances won't change or go away in seminary. In fact, seminary (and graduate studies) will intensify patterns that already exist in your life.

Married Students

If you're married (and have a family), is everyone on board? Is everyone okay with moving, if necessary? Can you and your spouse support your family during seminary; is there employment available for one or both of you? Most people don't realize how all-consuming seminary gets, especially when you are encouraged to minister in your local church in some fashion. Are you ready to put your spouse and family above your education and ministry?

Single Students

If you're single, have you thought through and built up your network of emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, and financial support going into seminary? Whether you have roommates or live alone, things happen; do you have people you can call on? It might feel like marriage and families predominate; you may sometimes feel lonely. Or that everyone you know schemes to set you up on dates every weekend. (It's not like Paul or Jesus were single or anything.)

All Students

Have you thought about what it means to have healthy, honest, intimate relationships with friends, classmates, co-workers, and parishioners across genders and life stages? Human relationships are meant for intimacy, and it's important to consider what that looks like in addition to marriage and romance.

Do you know how to deal with your physicality, your habits and stressors? Theological education, seeing as it's focused on 'spiritual things,' can sometimes tempt us to falsely divide the spiritual and the physical.

Be intentional and alert to what you do as a physical being, especially in the isolation in which you might find yourself while in seminary. There is nothing that the grace of God cannot redeem, but there's just some baggage you don't want to carry around.

Squad Goals

The goals you have at the beginning of your studies, and the education you actually receive rarely match up. You may find yourself discouraged at some point in your seminary experience. This is part of the journey.

We have learned that if seminary was just about education, it would be easy. But it's not, so sometimes it's really difficult. If nothing else, seminary is an immersion into intense study of words and concepts and books being thrown at you, with little or no time to process it all. This, alongside the fact that you are also living a life! Things happen; you meet people, hear their stories. Family members get sick; people die, people get married, people get born. We fight, and make up, and encourage each other.

And this is where the really difficult part comes in. Because, if for no other reason than you are more clearly aware of it, God has you in a crucible of refining and purifying you in the lifelong process of making you who he created you to be. He will break your heart, if you let him. He may break it even if you don't.

So, all things considered, you really, really want to go to seminary. Know that he who calls you will equip you. You might feel yourself wrung out in the process, and life and ministry may not get any easier, but...it does get richer.

So...

- Are you ready to keep moving forward?
- Even if the call you heard at first grows faint, or goes silent?
- Even if the plans you made at the beginning fall apart, and you end up somewhere totally unexpected?
- Who do you serve, and why are you here?

You may not have answers to all of these questions right now, and that's okay. But if it feels like there's a fire shut up in your bones; if you are tired of trying to hold it in, and you want to cry the gospel with your life...it may take you to seminary.

That's what we're here to help you discern. Be aware, be excited, and (we hope), welcome to seminary!

APPLYING TO GORDON-CONWELL—CHARLOTTE

Ready to apply? Please note our application requirements:

- Bachelor's degree from an institution accredited by a recognized accreditation body
- Charlotte Application form
- Three written recommendations: Pastor/Church Official; former Professor/current Colleague; Friend/Mentor
- Two essays: a spiritual autobiography and a personal statement
- Official transcripts sent directly from **all** colleges and other institutions of higher education attended
- Application filing fee of \$50 (U.S.)

If you do not have access to the web, please contact us and we will try to accommodate your particular needs. You are encouraged to complete these steps as early as possible. Application deadlines are:

- Fall Semester: July 15
- Spring Semester: November 15
- Summer: April 15

If you would like to schedule a visit or speak with a member of our Admissions team, please contact the Admissions Office. May our Lord continue to guide you in your preparation for theological education.