

The Ailbe Seminary

The Fellowship of Ailbe



Realizing the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

Ladders 1.1 Introduction to Biblical Theology
Introduction and Overview

T. M. Moore, Presenter

The Laddership Curriculum: Introduction

*She was a marvelous ladder whereby the tribes
could reach the kingdom of the Son of Mary.*

- Broccán, *Hymn to Saint Brigit* (Irish, 7th century)

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

- 2 Timothy 2.1, 2

The image of Christian leaders as ladders occurs twice in the literature of the Celtic Christian period. It is a powerful way of thinking about those who are charged with seeking the Kingdom of God and leading others to seek and attain to it as well.

Dallán Forgaill was the first to use this image; late in the 6th century he employed it to describe the men trained by Colum Cille, the founder of the Iona monastic community. Under his tutelage many young men became ladders laid against the heavenly city (in Gaelic, *frí arthu ar chathín*). It's a simple but beautiful image, at once poetic and profound, and it should inspire each of us in our calling to make disciples.

Brigit is one of the three great early saints of Ireland, along with Patrick and Colum Cille. She flourished near the beginning of the sixth century and was renowned for her exemplary life of piety and compassion.

Many from the pagan tribes of Ireland found their way to the Kingdom of God through her ministrations, as she served as a ladder to the Kingdom. Consider what this requires.

First, she had to have her own life and vision – the top of the ladder – *firmly fixed in the Kingdom of Christ*. Brigit was described by a later biographer as disciplined in meditation and prayer, so much so that, even while driving her chariot on some mission of witness or mercy she could “practice the life of heaven on earth through meditation and prayer.”

If we would be ladders to the City of God we must have our own vision parked above the walls of the Kingdom, so that we are ever gazing within that unseen, sacred landscape.

Second, Brigit had to have the foot of her ladder *firmly set among the people* she sought to serve. She had to be among them, understanding their struggles, earthy and real and caring. Brigid maintained her own community of the followers of Christ, caring for them and instructing them continuously, and she served regularly among believers throughout her district. Moreover, like Peter, following Jesus' instruction to push out into the deep water for a catch (Lk. 5), Brigit traveled frequently among the pagan peoples for whose sakes she ministered the grace of the Lord. She went to them, knew them, and cared for them, and she sought to meet their needs as best she could, whether by words or deeds.

We who are called to make disciples must likewise go among the people who need to know the grace of Jesus, discovering their needs and seeking ways of giving them a *leg up* toward a fuller experience of the Kingdom of God.

Finally, for Brigid and other Celtic Christian leaders to be ladders to the Kingdom, they had to *lay down their own lives for others*, setting a good example, showing the right way, creating opportunities for growth and progress in the Kingdom, and being willing to be spent for others that they might find their way through them to the grace of the Lord.

Through their teaching and other ministries, Brigid and Colum Cille offered many *rungs* whereby the people they served could rise above their mundane circumstances and lives and make steady progress toward the Kingdom of God.

Every believer is called to the task of making disciples. This calling is especially incumbent upon those who, serving as leaders in the communities of faith, are called to lead the way into the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit which abound in the Kingdom of God (Rom. 14.17, 18).

Late in the Celtic period, as the Norsemen began to savage the ancient monasteries, Celtic leaders built high towers as places of refuge against the wrath of an unbelieving age. When the enemies of God attacked, the shepherds would send their flocks up the ladder, through the elevated door, and into the safety of the high tower, where they would pull up the ladder behind them, join in prayer and singing, waiting on the Lord and growing stronger together through their trials, better equipped to serve their King. The leaders would remain on the ground, securing the ladder as others climbed to safety, and then return to the chapel to sing and pray for their community. Many did not survive the savage attacks of their enemies.

In our day, as the enemies of the Gospel are becoming bolder, and both more subtle and more determined, the Kingdom of God remains a fortress of safety, sheltering the people of God against the ravages of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and fortifying them for revival, renewal, and awakening. But like the high tower at Glendalough, the Kingdom of God, the Holy City of our Lord, needs ladders – men and women like Brigid and Colum Cille who will shepherd the flocks of God into His Kingdom and lead them forth from it into greater strength and service in the Lord.

The Church today has had many leaders, and the effect of their leadership, over the past generation, has been to position the Church squarely on the margin of society, where it is having minimum effect for the Kingdom of God. If more of our contemporary Church *leaders* were like those *ladders* of the Celtic Revival, we might find the Church more powerful and effective in advancing the rule of King Jesus on earth as it is in heaven.

Of course, the metaphor of the ladder as God's way into the Kingdom predates the Celtic period. Our Lord Jesus referred to Himself as the ladder seen by Jacob in his dream (Gen. 28; cf. Jn. 1.51). Jesus is the only true Ladder into the Kingdom. All our ladders – both we ourselves and our teaching – depend on Him, lean on His strength, and seek to participate with Him in His work, so that we might become His ladders to help others know the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Kingdom of God.

Our *Laddership* curriculum is committed to helping you become precisely that.

Our prayer is that you might become just such a ladder, laid against the parapets and towers of God's City, offering passage to all who seek the Kingdom with you. To that end, we offer our ladders to you, in the hope that these rungs might strengthen your own vision, discipleship, and witness for the Lord, and prove a resource for helping you become a ladder for others against the sacred walls of the City of God.

T. M. Moore
Principal

Introduction to Biblical Theology: Introduction and Overview

Welcome

Ladders 1.1 Introduction to Biblical Theology is a foundational course in Biblical theology. This course provides an overview of the Bible and explains an approach to understanding and using the Bible in order to gain maximum benefit from the Word of God for our lives and ministries.

We welcome you as a student in this course, which is part of our Ladders Kingdom Leadership curriculum.

This Introduction explains how to proceed through this course in order to gain the benefit appropriate to your level of involvement.

Course overview

Ladders 1.1 Introduction to Biblical Theology provides an overview of the structure and primary integrating themes of Scripture, together with an introduction to how to read and use Scripture in the life of faith. The course is divided into two sections, on Biblical Theological Method and Biblical Theological Motif, and these are woven together throughout the course in alternating lessons.

Biblical Theological Method

The lessons in Section I feature instruction in the following topics:

- Part 1: Getting *at* God's Word
 - The Uniqueness of Scripture
 - The Unity of Scripture
 - The Uses of Scripture
- Part 2: Getting *into* God's Word
 - The Priority of Scripture
 - The Perusal of Scripture
- Part 3: Getting *with* God's Word
 - The Assimilation of Scripture
 - The Application of Scripture

Each topic is presented by online video or live presentation and supported by reading and exercises designed to help you understand and put into practice the themes and principles discussed.

Biblical Theological Motif

The lessons in this section of Introduction to Biblical theology are contained in the workbook, *God's Covenant: Introduction and Overview*. These provide a more detailed study of the *motif* of Biblical theology, the study of God's plan and work of redemption within the framework of His covenant. The lessons in this section involve a general survey of the unfolding, development, and consummation of God's covenant throughout the Scriptures. The study of Biblical Theological Method and Biblical Theological Motif are woven together throughout the 3 Parts of this course.

Objectives

The following objectives have been identified for this course:

1. Love for God:
 - 1.1 To increase your love for the Word of God and your delight in reading and studying it
 - 1.2 To improve the consistency and effectiveness of your use of Scripture
 - 1.3 To help you grow in love for Jesus Christ, as He is revealed throughout His Word
2. Love for Neighbor:

- 2.1 To help you grow in love for your neighbor as a refraction of God's covenant love for you
- 2.2 To equip you for more consistent application of Scripture in ministering to others
- 2.3 To equip you to help others become more consistently and vitally engaged with the Word of God

By the end of this course you will:

- 1. Understand the covenantal structure of Scripture, together with the primary themes of that structure, and be able to trace those themes as they appear and interact throughout the Bible;
- 2. Have improved your use of the Scriptures through more focused and consistent reading and study;
- 3. Have gained an introductory understanding of Biblical theology and its contribution to knowing the Lord, and enjoying the benefits and fulfilling the obligations of life in His Kingdom;
- 4. Be able to share the covenantal structure and themes of Scripture with other believers;
- 5. Be more effective and consistent in meeting God through your reading and study of Scripture, and in reflecting that encounter in your everyday life.

Format

This course is available online and is suitable for individual study or for use by members of a group. It consists of readings and studies in Scripture, readings related to the method and motif of Biblical theology, brief video presentations, regular assignments for submission, and practical exercises to help in applying learning. Students are assigned a Course Reader to help them through the course, and optional online discussion groups are available at intervals throughout the course. Optional online discussions are held following Lessons 2, 5, and 7. Students will be advised of precise dates and sent a link to connect them to the online conference room.

Course materials

God's Covenant by T. M. Moore (required: [click here to order](#))

Please Note: This workbook carries a large burden of the course content. You will not be able to complete the lessons or gain the overall benefit of the course apart from this resource. If purchasing this workbook works a hardship on you, please let us know, and we will send it to you in a PDF at no charge.

In addition to the above, this course includes three readings which are provided in the Lessons for the course. These are:

Living toward the Promises, by T. M. Moore

On Christian Doctrine, Book I, by Augustine

Scripture Twisting: A Hermeneutic of Convenience, by T. M. Moore

For each Lesson in this course, a psalm is provided that reflects on the role of Scripture in the life of faith. We ask you to sing these psalms as assigned (lyrics provided).

Assignments

The assignments for each Lesson are provided at the beginning of each Lesson, followed by questions for reflection or discussion to guide you through the assignments for each Lesson. These questions will make up a large part of the content of the Lesson assignments. Students should prepare thoroughly.

Getting started

In order to begin this course, first register with The Ailbe Seminary, then register for the course. When you finish registering, simply go to the Syllabus tab for this course, click on Lesson 1, and follow the instructions. We hope you will find this course to be greatly enriching to your relationship with the Lord, your reading and study of God's Word, and your ministry in His Name.