

Bachelor of Bible Research

A New Degree for Bible Institute Graduates!

I stood before the Indiana State Private School Accreditation commission, a permanent committee of the Indiana state Legislature. I described for them two kinds of theological training in the evangelical community...which I termed "Bible institute" and "Bible college".

I described how the traditional college curriculum is more broadly based, including philosophy, psychology, and heavier studies in scholarship and the original languages, I told how the Bible institute curriculum is a narrower focus, specializing in Bible content...what St. Paul said rather than what the great doctors have said.

Members of the commission recognized my description, and were familiar with the two kinds of schools, I related how my own training was in a Bible institute, and how my classmates and other alumni of the school (and other similar schools) had manned mission stations, pastored churches, administered Christian organizations and served as laymen in thousands of churches for more than a century, Because the test of any school is its graduates, the Bible institutes have proven themselves to be most effective in their training. On this the members of the commission agreed.

However, I continued, these schools do not operate on an equal footing with the colleges. "You are the people who say to the Bible college, 'you can give a degree', and to the Bible institute, 'you can give only a diploma'." (Nods of agreement around the room).

"But there is no way that 3 to 4 years of residency study beyond high school at a Bible institute is the academic equivalent of a hairdresser' school, which might be three weeks and no high school required...and that's what a diploma represents." "Or a truck drivers' school," added one commission member.

I described the difficulties caused by such a situation, and the misunderstanding created in the Christian church community by this. How many prospective students have been influenced away from a Bible-content curriculum because it did not end in a degree, and how many adults have counseled the youth to "go for the degree", with hardly a second thought as to the curriculum content! I know of people who climbed the academic ladder, only to find that it was leaning against the wrong wall! And graduates of the Bible

institutes face that same misconception when entering their ministry; churches do not clearly understand the situation when looking for pastors and other staff.

I continued to put my case to the commission: Since the institutes have also proved their worth by training Christian workers for more than a century, to say to one philosophy of Christian education, "You can have a degree," while saying to another, "You cannot", is in my view a form of religious discrimination. I am here to ask for equal rights for Bible institutes.

There was a few seconds of silence, and one of the commission members said, "I think he is right." Another said, "So do I." Then came the inevitable question for which I had been preparing for months: "What do you suggest should be done?"

I replied, "Let there be a new degree established...not B.Th. or B.R.E. or any other degree that already stands for the Bible college curriculum...but a special degree that stands only for the specialty in Bible content for which Bible Institutes are known. I suggest the B.B.R. degree, Bachelor of Bible Research...one that says to the church community. "This person knows his Bible." Further, I am willing to establish an organization, Bible Research International, to administer such a degree.

In addition, there is currently no place for a graduate of a Bible Institute to go to continue his specialty, and there needs to be an M.B.R. (Master of Bible Research) made available.

There was considerable discussion of this program by the commission members, and the final reply to me was this:

"We agree with the concept, but we need to know that you are not alone in this. Bring us letters from others in the Bible institute community (and they named one prominent Bible institute that ought to be represented). Also, if we approve of such a program, you will be required to provide a one-credit course that applicants must take so that there is some indication of their qualification on which you can base your degree issuing. That course, plus a diploma from a 'minimum three-year, post-secondary Bible institute', will be the authorization for the degree. We will also authorize you to prepare a Master's curriculum. You will be required to be bonded, and you must not charge more than \$400 for the B.B.R. degree and course. (That was about 20 years ago, and the cost is still under \$400.)

I obtained letters from those in the Bible institute community: a school president and an academic dean from a Michigan Bible institute, the academic dean from an Illinois Bible institute, a faculty member from an Alberta Bible institute, and others. The international

president of a mission society said he would recognize the degree, since he had many missionaries on his fields that were trained at Bible institutes.

I forwarded the letters to the Indiana State Accrediting Commission, and waited for their reply. They contacted me to state that my application would be decided on a certain date; I flew to Indianapolis, and the next morning entered the hearing room at 9:05 a.m.

The commission chairman stated, "Rev. Lainson is here, and perhaps commission members would agree to amend the agenda to deal with the B.B.R. matter first so as not to delay him." Members agreed, and confirmed that they had all received and read copies of the letters I had provided. He asked for comments...and they were unanimous in favouring the plan. A vote was taken, and I was back in the hall before 9:30!

After leaving the Indiana State Accrediting Commission meeting, I now had the assignment of creating a one-credit course for Bible Institute graduates. I determined that it would be a contribution to all who took it...pastors, missionaries, lay leaders...something that was not just a re-hash of what they had already taken at Bible school. I put a great deal of work into that project, and was conscious of God's spirit guiding and confirming all along the way.

The first recording of the course was sent to those very people...pastors, missionaries, bible institute teachers and lay leaders...graduates of Bible institutes. I asked them to review the course and answer two questions:

1. Is this course needed and additional to the usual Bible institute curriculum?
2. Are there any changes you would like to suggest?

The response was unanimous: Yes, this course is needed and is not taught in the average Bible institute! One wrote, "This is the missing note in evangelicalism today!" We still get comments like that.

Bible Research International has been established, and some distinguished persons joined me on the board...one of whom was the late Dr. Richard Boytim, whose earned doctorate in Greek and Hebrew, whose many years as a professor in Bible institutes and Bible colleges, and whose experience in supervising the transfer of credits from one school to another, were all of great value to us as we established the program.

And that, friends is the story behind the B.B.R. degree. Scores of Bible institute graduates have taken the one-credit course "**Journey to the Centre of Life**", and obtained the degree. Because Bible institute graduates tend to be missionaries and

pastors who move from one church to another, Christian servants from literally every continent have completed our course and obtained our degree.

If you are a Bible institute graduate, send us an e-mail requesting information to begin your degree program; by graduating from a Bible institute, you have completed over 90% of the requirements for this degree. Why not finish it?

If you have a friend who is a Bible institute graduate, pass along this information to him or her as a favour, or contact us and we'll pass it along.

"Journey to the Centre of Life" is available **both** as a single-credit study course **and** as a required course for the B.B.R. degree. The course is attractively packaged and ready to slip into a three-ring binder, containing 12 half-hour lectures on audio cassettes, with outline notes and class assignments.

A sealed examination is enclosed; the student breaks the seal in the presence of a monitor who will verify that the student used no aids in completing the exam except for an open bible that does not have study notes. There is no time limit while taking the exam. The student also prepares a 4,000 word research paper, applying the central truth of the course to some aspect of daily living - usually an aspect in which the student has a special interest.

In the closing, you will see a sample of the comments we have received from those who have taken this course. Read them carefully, for they have all been written by those Christian workers (pastors, missionaries, etc.) who have spent hours in study guided by this course.

In recent years, I have produced this course in slide form, and have taught it often using both the audio cassettes and the slides; I have presented it on cable television as a "weekly Bible class for credit". In each case, the impact has been tremendous. I am grateful to God forgiving me this message to share with church leaders and with mission leaders.

From the beginning, we have made this pledge: if you complete this course as prescribed, and feel it has not been worth the time and money - tell us how much we owe you, and we will refund up to the entire cost. We have never had anyone apply for a refund.

Complete the coupon and send it to us with your cheque, and begin your own personal **"Journey to the Centre of Life"**.

Journey to the Centre of Life A One-credit, 12 lesson Bible Study course available for private or group study. Based on Colossians I and II Corinthians 5, it teaches a "Christian cosmology", a refreshing world-life view. Excellent for teens, too.

READ WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT "JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF LIFE"

LONG OVERDUE...EXCELLENT COURSE, ENJOYED IMMENSELY...I HIGHLY RECOMMEND IT.

Pastor, Ontario, Canada

RELEVANT...OF EXTREME BENEFIT TO ME PERSONALLY.

Missionary, Australia

THE MAIN THRUST IS A TERRIFIC IDEA. THE COURSE IS EXCITING, EDUCATIONAL AND ENLIGHTENING.

Home Bible Study Teacher, Michigan, USA

...SHOULD BE COMPULSORY FOR BIBLE SCHOOL GRADUATES...IT CHANGED MY ATTITUDE.

Village Missionary, Saskatchewan, Canada

FILLS AN EXISTING GAP IN PRESENT DAY EVANGELICAL TEACHING...GOD IS GOING TO USE THIS COURSE.

Professor, Bible Institute, Alberta, Canada

I HAVE CONSIDERED NEW AREAS...A CHALLENGE FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN...DEMANDS CONCLUSIONS...AN EXCELLENT EXPERIENCE.

Pastor, Michigan, USA

PLEASE SEND A COPY TO OUR MISSION STATION - RIGHT AWAY.

Assistant Field Chairman, Caribbean

TRUTH THAT NEEDS TO BE PROCLAIMED!

Secretary, Ontario, Canada

A TREMENDOUS CONCEPT...REALLY NEEDED TODAY.

Bible School Teacher, Missionary, Illinois, U.S.A

REALLY NEEDED FOR TODAY...IT'S A GOOD COURSE...I RECOMMEND IT.

Associated Gospel Pastor, Ontario

INDEED NEEDFUL TODAY...IT IS MY PRAYER THAT BIBLE SCHOOLS WILL MAKE THIS COURSE COMPULSORY.

Pastor, Manitoba, Canada

IF AN ENTIRE CHURCH COULD GRASP THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS COURSE, AND HAVE THE COURAGE TO PUT THIS TRUTH INTO ACTION, THEIR TOWN WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME!

Mission Administrator, Ontario, Canada