

REVISED EDITION

HOW DO I KNOW GOD IS CALLING — ME TO — SEMINARY?

For Leaders, Learners, and Anyone
Longing to Go Deeper In Theology



Discerning whether God is calling you to deepen your theological knowledge by attending a seminary is a profound spiritual decision that requires prayer, reflection and wise counsel.

Calling is not always revealed in a single moment; it is often clarified over time as you walk faithfully. Seminary is a significant commitment, but it can also be a beautiful time of formation, fellowship, and discovery.

Here are several meaningful ways to discern what God may be calling you to in this season of your life—along with insights from Leland faculty who have spent years walking alongside, teaching and supporting students who once stood where you stand now.



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Prayer and Personal Discernment

Ask God to make His will known to you and to grant you peace and clarity about next steps. Reflect on relevant Biblical passages

(e.g., Proverbs 3:5–6, Jeremiah 29:11, James 1:5)



Dr. Andrey Shirin

Director of Transformational Leadership

God may be calling you to a seminary if you feel that the best way to spend the rest of your life is to serve Him. This comes with the longing to be closer to God. And this longing includes the desire to know God as best you can.

We learn about our loved ones through fellowshiping with them, not just by gathering as much information about them as we can; their backstory, values, inclinations.

This is what true seminary learning is like. Not only does it introduce students to what the best faithful minds have had to say about God, it puts that knowledge into the broader context of students' ministries.

At Leland, we equip students to examine their personal journeys with God, discover their gifts, and immerse themselves into prayerful studying of transformative practices. Not only do we learn more about and become closer to God, we also discern our role and place in the workings of the Holy Spirit today.



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Spiritual Gifts and Life Circumstances

It's wise to evaluate whether this path aligns with your spiritual gifts and how God has been shaping your life.

Do you have a passion for teaching, pastoral care, community leadership, or deep theological reflection?

Have others in your life—pastors, mentors, family—affirmed your gifts for ministry or spiritual leadership? Does this season of life support your pursuit of seminary training?



Rev. John McNeill
Director School of Ministry

Sometimes, the call to seminary begins as a quiet unrest in the soul—a gentle, persistent whisper that *won't go away*. It might come in the form of tears during worship, a deep ache when witnessing suffering, or a sacred dissatisfaction with the ordinary path.

The idea of seminary terrifies you, humbles you, maybe even frustrates you, yet it keeps finding its way back into your thoughts, your prayers, your dreams. It is as if God is carving out a space in your life, stripping away comfort to make room for calling.

You'll know it's God because the idea won't let you go—and because everything else, no matter how good, it starts to feel like settling.

You'll know it's God when your excuses wear thin, when your fear meets grace, and when people around you start naming the very thing you've been too afraid to speak.

It doesn't always come with certainty, but it often comes with surrender—a decision to walk forward, even trembling, because your spirit knows there's something sacred on the other side of obedience.

Seminary isn't just a career move; it's a response to a God who's been pursuing your "yes" all along.



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Open and Closed Doors

God often speaks through circumstances—both opportunities and obstacles.

Has a door opened at Leland or another seminary through acceptance, financial aid, or a divine encounter?

Are there barriers that might indicate redirection rather than resistance?



Rev. Rhon Williams

Adjunct Professor

*I often wonder if others have felt or currently feel like I did years ago. **My life was going great.** I was serving in my church as a lay leader and I was closer to God than I had ever been.*

My kids were healthy and happy, my wife and I were closer each day, and my business was setting new records each week.

From the outside, everything looked perfect.

***But something inside was off.** I could feel it, even taste it. I sought council from trusted friends, pastors, and my wife. I prayed, my friends prayed and most importantly, my wife prayed with me.*

*A few weeks went by and then, suddenly the answer came. **It was God.***

He was calling. I could have missed it so easily because everything was good. I could have chalked it up to mid-life crisis or something else, but it was clearly God. He was calling and so my new story began. It began with Leland classes in Charlottesville...



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Practical and Missional Fit

Seminaries, like Leland, have a specific mission and educational style.

Are there barriers that might indicate redirection rather than resistance?



Rev. Dr. John Lee
Academic Dean

Let's consider two questions. "Is God Calling Me to Deepen My Theological Knowledge?" and "How Do I Know if God is Calling Me to Seminary?"

The answer to the first question is, "Yes!" Every follower of Jesus is called to love God with all one's heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37; Deut. 6:5). Deepening one's theological knowledge is part of Christian discipleship; and this applies to everyone, young and old.

The second question is a bit different. Seminaries are dedicated places where deepening theological knowledge is their main business. As dedicated places, resources (faculty, students, books, and conversations) are all aligned to deepen theological knowledge.

So, how do you know God might be calling you to seminary? Well, if the desire for theological knowledge cannot be satisfied by personal study alone; if the desire to know is combined with a strong desire to help or minister to others; and if the desire is recognized by others who know you well -- if the answer to all three of these is a "Yes," then there's a very good chance that God is calling you to seminary.



Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Pruitt
President

"Have you ever asked yourself, "How can God's mission in the world involve me?" or "How can I know that I have a specific purpose or calling?" If such questions have ever entered your mind, then seminary may just be for you.

God in Christ and through the Holy Spirit has beckoned every Christian to "come and follow Jesus." Responding to this call doesn't end with some random list of religious activities, but rather a supernatural development toward divine purpose – one's calling.

Within your discipleship journey, God has called you to a specific purpose for which He has gifted you with His presence and power.

Seminary offers the sacred space for one's calling to develop. It offers spiritual formation and growth, which always determine the effectiveness of one's calling.

Theological education expresses a significant grasp on God's Word, God's will, and God's way through Jesus in the church, and in all ministries.

It not only represent academic learning but involves academic disciplines to make one more effective in the pursuit of faith, ministry, and leadership. All throughout God's Word, the follower of Jesus hears the call to grow spiritually.

This may just be the time for you to step more deeply through this door of growth in your faith, calling, and purpose."



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Intellectual Curiosity and Spiritual Yearning

God not only gave us free will to choose Him, He delights in our passion to seek him with intentionality and conviction.

Are you in search of help interpreting His Word and understanding His ways?

Does the idea of delving deeply into Biblical learning with mentors and fellow seekers intrigue you?



Rev. Dr. Daniel Dapaah,
Professor of Divinity

If you've been struggling with questions about God's work in the world, you're not alone; we all do. Some struggle with deep existential questions, anxieties, and dilemmas of life.

For example, where is God when humans suffer, including babies and the innocent? Atheists and agnostics disagree with Christians who proclaim that God is all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful, and ever-present when He allows suffering on His creation. It requires a deep understanding of God's Word to refute this mistaken notion of God.

For clarity on the question of human suffering, for instance, we turn to the book of Job where he raises profound questions about (i) the nature of God; (ii) the purpose of life; (iii) free will; and (iv) the appropriate Christian response to suffering.

It is the humbling power of the divine speeches that help Job to understand that his relationship with God is ultimately the main issue and that suffering, while extremely important in the discourse, is secondary. We are called to trust in God's character and to share in the grief and pain of others with love and empathy.

Going to seminary will help you gain clarity about theological questions like this and equip you to help fellow seekers on the way.



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Making a Difference

Seminary can be a place to explore issues like poverty, racial reconciliation, or community healing through a faith-based lens.

Do you feel compelled to help bring God's justice, wisdom, and compassion to current struggles facing your community, your country, or the world?

Do you long for the leadership training, strong Biblical footing, and Spirit-led confidence to make an impact?



Samuel Feemster,
*Director of Institute for Justice
Formation*

Prospective seminarians must distinguish God's call to submit to the rigors of a seminary curriculum from a temporal, whimsical, self-absorbed notion.

God's call on our lives has nothing to do with what we can do for God. God's call to ministry preparation has everything to do with what He will do through willing servants.

Therefore, discerning God's call to ministry preparation begins by allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us through the power of God's self-revelation.

Some questions that may inform your decision include "Do I love what God says He loves?"; "Do I love who God says He loves?"; "Am I willing to divorce my embedded theology and embrace a deliberative theology confronting injustice in the church and the world?"

*Accept God's invitation to ministry preparation if you are willing to be transformed by the power of God's Word. **If you enroll at Leland, you'll find a nurturing community from registration to graduation!***

Going to seminary doesn't require a leap of faith...

just one step.

If you'd like to talk one-on-one with Leland Seminary staff, faculty, students or alumni about whether, or when, seminary may be right for you...

please visit us
online at www.leland.edu and schedule a
conversation.

