

# So You Are Thinking of Going to Seminary?

By Kevin DeYoung

I will speaking at Gordon-Conwell later today. This has me thinking about seminary. Here are a few questions to ask before you go, as you decide where to go, and while you are there.

## Three Questions Before You Go

*1. Might you benefit from more experience in the "real world" first?*

Many students will graduate from college and head off to seminary. This is what I did, so far be it from me to suggest you have to work a "real job" for three years before going. But for many students, seminary will be richer and more helpful with a little more life experience.

*2. Will your seminary education be going toward some end which requires such a seminary degree?*

Graduate school costs money, money you probably don't have. With so many Christian books, conferences, and online resources these days, you can learn a whole lot on your own. If you are going to seminary because you love Jesus and love the Bible, that's wonderful, but you may want to consider if there are less costly, less time-consuming, less disruptive ways to keep learning and growing.

*3. Are you prepared for a largely academic approach to learning?*

I am all for academics. I think seminary course work should be challenging. But writing long papers, taking tests, listening to lectures, and reading thousands of pages is not for everyone. Seminary is not like a three year Passion Conference. It is like graduate school. Know what you're getting in to.

## Three Questions as You Decide Where to Go

*1. Have you thought about the tradition you want to be a part of?*

Seminary does not set your trajectory for life, but it will immerse you in a certain culture and tradition. Southern is a good seminary; so is Westminster, so is Trinity. But one will put you in the middle of SBC life, another into the Presbyterian and Reformed world, and another more broadly into evangelicalism (and the Evangelical Free Church). Think about where you're from and where you want to end up.

*2. What is the community like?*

No seminary aims for lousy community, but some schools are largely commuter campuses while others have a dorm atmosphere that feels like an extension of college.

Know what you're looking for.

*3. Are there certain professors you want to learn from?* It's hard for seminaries to be much better (or much worse) than the faculty they employ. One of the reasons I went to Gordon-Conwell was to take classes from David Wells. I was not disappointed. Think about whom you respect and want to be with for 3-5 years.

### **Three Questions While You're at Seminary**

*1. Have I found a good local church?* I loved seminary, but without a ground in the local church, you can lose your bearing. You'll run the risk of being over-intellectual and disconnected from life-on-life ministry. Plus, if you aren't actively involved in a church you won't be able to discern whether pastoral ministry is really for you.

*2. Are you expecting for seminary to be something it's not?* Most seminaries try hard to provide hands-on learning and make the coursework useful for pastoral ministry. But it can't replace an internship or on the job training. Don't get down on seminary because it's a lot of note taking and paper writing. What did you expect?

*3. Are you ok being yourself?* Not every student can be the star student. Not every student can be the guitar hero. Not every student can be the guy with experience in 15 countries who speaks 4 languages. That's ok. Be yourself. Beware of pride, unhealthy competition, and jealousy. Say with Paul, by the grace of God I am what I am.

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