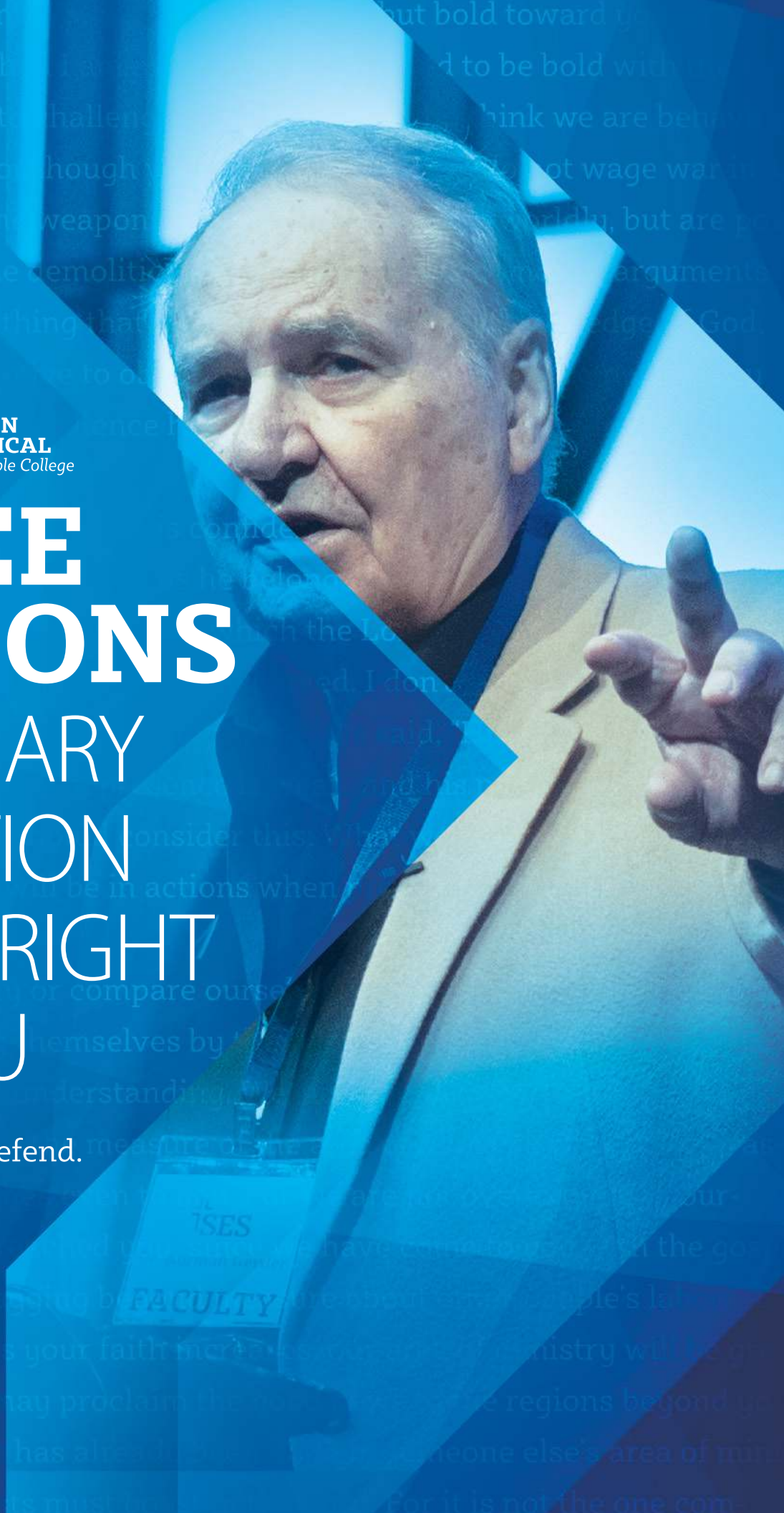




SOUTHERN
EVANGELICAL
Seminary & Bible College

THREE REASONS A SEMINARY EDUCATION MAY BE RIGHT FOR YOU

Proclaim. Engage. Defend.





THREE REASONS

a Seminary Education May Be Right for You

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The cover photo features SES co-founder, the late Dr. Norman Geisler.



INTRODUCTION

**ARE YOU
READY TO
ENGAGE?**

Whether you feel God leading you to pursue some form of professional ministry, or whether you simply want to be more equipped to teach Sunday School, talk with your coworkers, or train your family, there is good reason for you to consider earning a degree or certificate from Southern Evangelical Seminary and Bible College (SES). With sexual, moral, and theological confusion abounding, how do you evangelize the lost and equip the saints in a post-Christian society? Christ-followers are called to combat false ideas that stand in the way of the Gospel. To effectively engage with the culture, you will need a deeply integrated understanding of theology, philosophy, and apologetics—the bedrock of a degree from SES.

We all understand that every culture is built upon ideas, whether good or bad, that influence every aspect of life. Our modern cultural context is the consequence of numerous bad ideas playing themselves out which have resulted in a society that views Christianity very differently from years past. For example, two out of five Americans are now considered “post-Christian,” and 23 percent of American adults are considered “nones” (atheist, agnostic, or religiously unaffiliated).¹ Moreover, as much as 75 percent of youth are leaving the church after high school, and half of American skeptics now have a college degree.² Consider this: the Christian birthrate is around 2.1 compared to just 1.6 for “nones.”³ Yet, “nones” are on the rise and Christianity’s influence is declining. We are essentially breeding the next generation of skeptics!

What Do ‘Nones’ Think?

There are many reasons why people reject Christianity, some of which are emotional and willful. Nevertheless, when “nones” were specifically asked why they reject Christianity, their answers reveal the fact that they simply don’t think Christianity is true!

Instead, many often think one or more of the following:

- 1. Science and faith are incompatible because faith is irrational.**
- 2. There are no good reasons to believe in God.**
- 3. Christianity is bigoted, intolerant, and needlessly exclusive.**

While ministry within proper personal relationships is always important, as Barna Research Group has observed,

“... our research suggests that most of the efforts of Christian ministries fail to reach much beyond the core of ‘Christianized’ America. It’s much easier to work with this already-sympathetic audience than to focus on the so-called ‘nones’. ... Christians for whom ‘ministry is about relationships’ may be disappointed when they find that many skeptics are not as enamored of relational bonds as are those who are already a part of church life. ... New levels of courage and clarity will be required to connect beyond the Christianized majority.”⁴

Rather than run from bad ideas, believers are called to courageously be salt and light wherever they may find themselves (Matthew 5:13; Acts 17; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Titus 1:9; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3). Most church goers, however, are often ill-equipped for this task and just as confused as the “nones.” As more and more traditional Christian thinking is being forgotten, the bad ideas of the culture are being adopted by many modern believers. For instance, 68 percent of American church goers believe that God accepts the worship of all religions, 41 percent think gender is a matter of choice, and 49 percent agree that religious belief is a matter of personal opinion rather than objective truth.⁵



Why do *you* believe the Gospel is actually true? Why should anyone in a highly-educated, scientific, and technologically-advanced culture accept Christianity? Good theology, philosophy, and apologetics directly address all the issues listed above.

SES co-founder, the late Dr. Norman Geisler, said, “Apologetics is simply to defend the faith and thereby destroy arguments and every proud obstacle against the knowledge of God. It is opening the door, clearing the rubble, and getting rid of the hurdles so that people can come to Christ.” Sadly, the rubble and hurdles are many.

Do you currently have easy access to in-depth study taught by well-trained teachers on such relevant issues as atheism and skepticism? How about ethical concerns such as critical race theory, same-sex marriage, gender identity, and the right to life? What about reasons and arguments for the existence of God? What about the possibility of miracles? How about the problem of evil, the reliability of the Bible, or the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus? What about other religious movements such as Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, “progressive” Christianity, or Islam? The topics and issues needing to be addressed today could go on and on.

More than likely, you are not receiving adequate and in-depth training in these areas. And yet these are the very issues challenging the Christian faith in our country and world. As SES professor Dr. Richard Howe says, “Good theology is essential to good discipleship.” This short e-book is intended to help you consider three reasons why a seminary education may be right for you. More specifically, it is intended to communicate the importance of a special kind of in-depth seminary education.

SES offers students something that cannot be found anywhere else—accredited education programs that take an integrated approach to theology, philosophy, and apologetics. This deep and unique integration woven throughout each SES course will help you form a complete and systematic Christian world view. Regardless of your particular vocation or ministry context, sound theology that is undergirded with good philosophy and apologetics is a must for doing the heavy lifting of removing the obstacles standing in the way of someone coming to Christ. Such systematic thinking will equip you to more effectively *proclaim* the Gospel, *engage* the culture, and *defend* the Truth.

Please thoughtfully and prayerfully consider the following points, and know that we stand ready to come alongside you in your journey.





REASON ONE

**READING
BOOKS &
LISTENING
TO TALKS
IS NOT
ENOUGH**

You may or may not intend to be a professional Christian apologist, minister, or teacher. You may be just like hundreds of other seminary students who just want to learn more and be better equipped so Christ might use them more effectively in ministry. So why should you consider a degree or certificate from SES?

Before they go to seminary many people read books on apologetics and listen to or watch many talks, lectures, debates, etc. You may realize the Lord is using you, but more than likely you also think that you are missing something. Students studying to be schoolteachers, scientists, lawyers, doctors, or any number of professions do not learn their skills by just reading books and listening to inspiring talks. Please understand, there is an important role for books, podcasts, conferences, etc. After all, SES hosts many events including the [National Conference on Christian Apologetics](#), publishes a [blog](#) and [podcast](#), and even has a [smartphone app](#) with over 500 hours of free content. Nevertheless, when Dr. Geisler was once asked, “Why is that not in the textbook?” (a textbook Dr. Geisler actually authored), he quickly responded,

“Not everything is in the textbook; that is why we have class!”

You may like theology, philosophy, or apologetics, use the disciplines in ministry, and see the increasing cultural and worldwide need for them, but for whatever reason you have not considered taking the next step that reveals the value and importance of professionally studying these subjects to maximize your effectiveness in ministry. Just know that “not everything is in the textbook!”

Some learning will only be achieved in a controlled education setting with standards

by which you are held accountable and by which your achievement is measured. Textbooks and talks alone will not give you that. While in seminary, you should experience constant correction and being put in uncomfortable, but safe, positions so you can learn from failure as well as success in a way that the knowledge and practice of the subject becomes second nature.

Self-taught study in theology, philosophy, and apologetics, while usually better than no study at all, lacks focused training and an overarching structure that combines theory and practice in order to impact the breadth and depth of your ministry. It may produce knowledge, but self-study usually never rises to the proper level of insight, understanding, and wisdom in the practice of these disciplines.

At SES, we have never given up on our emphasis of apologetics and evangelism training. It is interwoven into all of our degrees and certificates. We do not merely offer courses in theology, philosophy, and apologetics. Rather, we weave these disciplines throughout each of our programs to form a cohesive and systematic understanding of reality as a whole. SES faculty and staff connect with you on your journey to advise, affirm, and mentor you along the way. Our focus is on discipleship and leadership training to multiply the effectiveness of your personal and professional ministry. Consider just a few thoughts from the SES family:

“If I knew a fraction of what I know now, it could have saved me from 10 years of atheism, and what I know now is only a fraction of what SES has to offer. I was looking for answers that no one could give me, and then I found SES.” – **SEAN MURPHY**, *SES Student*

“Apologetics wasn’t a side issue. It was the ... essence of the ministry I was doing. ... I’m finding out more and more how important it is to be trained in order to pick up on these philosophical problems to answer the real question that’s at hand.” – **ANTHONY MILLER**, *SES Student*

“I had high hopes when I applied [to SES], but they have been far exceeded. Thank you so much for putting together a program that is both intellectually challenging and applicable in the contemporary landscape. Joining SES has been the highlight of my academic career!” – **KRISTEN DAVIS**, *SES Student*

“I can’t recommend SES any more highly. ... There’s no better place to come to get to know God and make Him known.” – **DR. FRANK TUREK**, *SES Alum & Adjunct Professor, President of CrossExamined.org*





REASON TWO

**NOT ALL
APOLOGETICS
METHODS
ARE CREATED
EQUALLY**

If you have read any books on, or just watched others do, apologetics you have probably discovered that not everyone is teaching or doing apologetics the same way. You may not yet know why or be able to discern all the different ways. You may not even think it is important. Typically, only after studying the history and controversies related to the subject under professors that know the right way from the wrong ways will you be able to see the importance of what is known as *classical* apologetics. You will understand how apologetics supports and integrates into classical theism and all other subjects to create a systematic and defensible approach to Christianity. In addition, you will be motivated to learn it more effectively, efficiently, and comprehensively and be aware of the dangers inherent in certain other methods of defending the Gospel.

Here are five principles we believe apologetics must have to incorporate the right method and content:

1. Apologetics must be distinguished from evangelism. Apologetics answers questions about Christianity (1 Peter 3:15), and it can build a positive case for the Christian faith (Luke 1:4). But this is clearly different from evangelism or proclaiming the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Evangelism is done any time, any place, to anyone, in any conversation. Apologetics is only done when and if needed for unbelievers or even believers and is used to defend the faith or strengthen the faith.

2. Apologetics must define truth and demolish any relative notion of truth. To counter today's postmodern world, you need to defend truth as absolute. Our culture often says that beliefs about religion or God are subjective: true for you but

not necessarily for them. But if truth corresponds to reality, the way things are, then truth is grounded in the objective world everyone knows. The law of non-contradiction shows us that opposite ideas cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense/relationship. So if “C” (Christianity) is true, then all “non-C,” anything opposed to “C,” is false. The truth is, there is no such thing as a relative truth. Relativism is self-defeating, as it assumes relativism is true for everyone (i.e., absolute), which is nonsensical.

3. Apologetics must demonstrate the existence of God. If our second point is correct, then we can reason from a changing reality to an unchanging cause of all things. The traditional arguments for the existence and nature of God are not dead if truth is absolute and knowable. Regardless of one’s world view, because all humans share a common nature and have the same kind of human intellect, everyone has access to knowing truths about the same reality. Moreover, we must connect such arguments with the theistic nature of the God of the Bible (Exodus 3:14) and show that there can be only one such Being (God) who is necessary, eternal, all-knowing, and all-powerful.

4. Apologetics must show that world views opposed to Theism are false. Given points two and three above, it is possible to show that no opposing view of God is true or can be true. Atheism, the view that there is no God, and Pantheism, the view that God is identical to creation, are false if Theism (there is one transcendent God) is true. This, therefore, provides the context to understand everything else in the world, including science and history.

5. Apologetics must give a systematic defense of the Christian faith.

An apologetic must connect the theistic view of God to the historical truth of the New

Testament by showing that Jesus claimed to be God, fulfilled prophecy by rising bodily from the dead, and taught that his apostles had the same God-breathed inspiration and miraculous power as the Old Testament prophets.

Only upon these premises can we rest the claim that Christianity is true and everything opposed to it is false. Yes, there are difficult passages in the Bible, but the plain things are the main things. Yes, truth exists outside the Bible, but nothing can be true that contradicts the Bible since Jesus, the Son of God, taught it is the Word of God (John 17:17).

With apologetic resources so widely known and accessible today, it becomes increasingly important that the right method and content be a part of your apologetics education. The internet has certainly made that possible to a degree. Yet, because not all apologetic methodology is created equally, it can be a blessing or a curse. Therefore, we encourage you to evaluate apologetics programs, ministries, and materials to make sure that they do not miss these five important things so that your faith, and the faith of those you disciple, will not be compromised.





REASON THREE

**A DEGREE
IS MORE
THAN A
PIECE
OF PAPER**



You may indeed be struggling with valid questions: “How will I pay for this?” or, “How will I find the time?” Certainly, only by God’s grace and providence will this happen, and we do not counsel anyone to go into debt or sacrifice their family for a seminary education. Even with the challenges of time and money, most who have studied theology, philosophy, and apologetics in seminary will agree that going to seminary was one of the most important things they ever did, and they would do it again if needed. Most things in life that are truly helpful, worthwhile, and lifelong take time, effort, and commitment to have any payoff. A theological education is no different. Hence, that diploma is a valuable historical record of your learning experience.

Here are five reasons to be thankful for a theological seminary education like you will find at SES:

1. Be thankful for good philosophy. Philosophy is the *fabric of theology*.

It is interwoven throughout and holds all truth together. Theology is possible because philosophy can demonstrate the existence and nature of God without relying on the Bible. Yet, it gives us the tools needed to explore the existence of God’s nature, which is in unmistakable agreement with the God of the Bible. Philosophy also

shows how we can meaningfully use language to speak about God, while recognizing that finite minds will never exhaust His majesty. The philosophical supporting of theology is just one unique and important aspect for which SES is known. True philosophy will always support the theological endeavor. Without this, one is more likely to support theology with wrong reasoning or see no reason at all for some theological assertions.

2. Be thankful for Biblical Studies. The Bible is the *bedrock*

of theology. Many who go off to secular colleges and universities have taken religion or Bible classes from a liberal professor. However, after hearing SES professors like Dr. Thomas Howe, you realize your education in the Bible has been a half-inch high (maybe less) and three miles long (or longer). It simply has no depth. Our professors provide amazing insights into the structure of the biblical books, explain how to deal with difficult passages, and demolish critical theories that undermine the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.

3. Be thankful for Historical Theology. History is the *legacy*

of theology. Ignore theology's history and you might be led into error, or worse. Many cults and false teachers today are just repackaging errors found in dusty books. We must know our history and tradition, respect it and learn from it, but also bring it to the bar of Scripture. Because of the Reformation, we can rest assured the five Solas (Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, and glory to God alone) will continue to be known if we have the Bible in the language of the people. You will treasure the Bible more and not complain of so many translations when you realize the price paid to put it in our tongue. Indeed, because men of God paid with their lives, the torch of God's grace has not gone out, and you are able to study your Bible.

4. Be thankful for Apologetics. Apologetics is the defense

of theology. Many today continue to hold to the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible because of Christian apologetics. Apologetics must begin with reality or truth common to all, not just the Bible. It must dig deeply into philosophy, science, and history and pull out demonstrations for the truthfulness of Christianity.

One old but common objection to apologetics heard in church even today says, “The Bible, the Word of God, does not need to be defended. It is like a lion; all you need to do is let it loose.” Dr. Geisler insightfully answered this by saying, “The Word of God does not need a defense, but that statement ‘the Bible is the word of God’ needs a defense.” Otherwise, we would have no answer to other religions who claim their book to be the “word of God.” Indeed, we fear a lion only because we already know what a lion can do.

5. Be thankful for Systematic Theology. Systematic theology is the

fullest expression of theology. The problem with some people’s theology before seminary was that it did not have enough “systematic” in it. Granted, it may lack some “theology” too, but it is the *systematic* that makes everything stick together or make sense. Only systematic theology integrates truth outside the Bible with truth inside the Bible to give a coherent and full expression of all God’s revelation found in the created world and in the inspired Word. When we finally see how one doctrine affects another, then we understand that there is nothing more important for developing a true understanding of Christianity and the world.

For example, SES emphasizes the important philosophical and theological truth that God exists as pure actuality (Pure Act) with no potentiality to change because upon this

truth hangs all the attributes of God. To not make sure all theological reasoning adheres to this truth is to steer in the direction that makes God a mere angel or Superman. Likewise, we teach the importance of consistently applying the historical-grammatical method of interpretation to arrive at a correct understanding of every biblical doctrine. To not do so is to swerve theology in the direction of spiritualizing the scriptural text. SES consistently teaches that these five vital principles and God's unshakable truth that constitutes these subjects are relevant to the study of theology. As one SES student observed,

"I simply could not be doing what I am doing, the way that I am doing it, without the training I received at SES. ... I learned how to think through issues in a way that is simply foreign to most Christians, including graduates of other seminaries."

It is a heavy order to think you will be involved in providing theological education to the next generation. Such a responsibility must be taken seriously as teachers will incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1). We hope you take your theological education seriously and be thankful it is not deficient or missing from your ministry. One recent SES grad put it this way,

"The integrated approach of synthesizing a sound philosophy with classical apologetics and a cohesive, biblical theology is probably the thing I love most about SES. The value of such a systematized and integrated approach for one's apologetics, ministry, and personal growth is difficult to explain until you have experienced it for yourself."



ONE MORE THING

**TAKING
YOU BEYOND
ONLINE
EDUCATION**

Your schedule is busy. We get it. Between family, work, ministry, sports, etc., how can you make time for class? We fully understand the complex demands on our students, so we have created seminary options for busy schedules like your's that take your learning beyond merely online education.

SES takes a *digital-first* approach by providing a *fully immersive digital campus experience* where every aspect of traditional education is achieved in a virtual environment by integrating industry-leading technologies for live-streaming, course management, and student interaction. Hence, every degree and certificate offered by SES can be completed via our digital campus (*the D.Min. program has limited on-campus requirements*). This format enables us to accommodate even the most demanding of schedules and allows you to get a first-class education without leaving your current ministry context.

Live-Streaming Courses

Our live-streaming format provides the best in distance education, allowing students to interact in real-time with their professors and peers. The live course lectures and interaction are also recorded and posted back to our course management platform for on-demand viewing throughout the semester.

Asynchronous Courses

Each semester, some courses are offered in a pre-recorded asynchronous format. Many of these courses utilize studio-produced recorded lectures that students may watch at their convenience while meeting syllabus deadlines. Additional live-streaming components and professor/peer interaction supplement the asynchronous format allowing students to remain connected.

A Truly Digital Campus

Our newly added *Digital Theological Library* gives our students access to over 650,000 eBooks, thousands of journal titles and peer-reviewed articles, and much more. Moreover, by using our learning management platform Canvas, we are able to create virtual hangouts, clubs, discussion groups, etc. that allow our students and professors to interact in real-time. Our integrated digital campus experience enables us to foster community and connectedness even while we may be physically distant.

This *digital-first* approach means SES is committed to meeting our students where they are by not only providing a challenging educational curriculum but also offering ways for the SES family to connect outside the classroom. Additional resources are currently being added to our digital campus that will further facilitate the spiritual growth, community, and educational experience of SES students as we continue to utilize Dr. Geisler's integrated approach to Christian thinking and move beyond online education.





CONCLUSION

**WHAT
ARE YOU
WAITING
FOR?**

Southern Evangelical Seminary and Bible College is not just for pastors. It is for high schoolers, homeschool parents, Sunday school teachers, lay ministers, lay missionaries, and of course, the professional Christian schoolteacher, minister, missionary, and pastor. SES is for anyone wanting to be more equipped to effectively engage today's post-Christian culture with the truth of the Gospel.

Thomas Aquinas put it this way in his famous *Summa Contra Gentiles*,

“... we must take note that, though a man is unable, by the movement of his free-will, to merit or acquire the divine grace, nevertheless he can hinder himself from receiving it. ... And since it is in the power of the free-will, to hinder or not to hinder the reception of divine grace, *he who places an obstacle in the way of his receiving grace is deservedly to be blamed.* ... thus he who shuts his eyes while the sun is shining is to be blamed if an accident occurs, although he is unable to see unless the sun's light enable him to do so.”

The integrated approach to Christian thinking you will receive at SES is unlike anything you will find at nearly any other evangelical institution. Specifically, the classical philosophy that undergirds everything taught at SES provides a solid foundation from which to do theology (with a deep understanding of the nature and attributes of God), hermeneutics (sadly, most scholars now deny the possibility of discovering the objective meaning of any text, including the Bible), and apologetics (specifically *classical* apologetics). All this, of course, impacts the extent to which believers are equipped to remove the hurdles and obstacles standing in the way of someone coming to Christ.

In short, believers are called to courageously be salt and light wherever they may find themselves. Your personal and professional ministry can have a greater impact with formal, and integrated, training in theology, philosophy, and apologetics. SES can give you that training and equip you to more effectively *proclaim* the Gospel, *engage* the culture, and *defend* the truth. As SES President Dr. Richard Land says,

“Over the years, it has become increasingly clear to me that the way we will spell evangelism, discipleship, missions, and Christian education in the 21st century is *apologetics*. ... Among evangelical institutions, SES uniquely infuses classical apologetics and philosophy throughout each of our programs to serve this end. Hundreds of SES graduates are proclaiming and defending the Christian faith from the pulpit, the mission field, on campus, and in the business world. Will you be next among them?”

So, what are you waiting for? To learn more about applying to SES, please contact one of our Admissions Counselors at admissions@ses.edu or call **(704) 847-5600 x216**.



Recommended Reading

As you prepare to equip yourself to better proclaim and defend the Gospel, we recommend the following books (with many more available upon request):

1. Norman L. Geisler, *If God, Why Evil? A New Way to Think About the Question* (Bethany House, 2011).
2. Norman L. Geisler, *Twelve Points That Show Christianity is True* (Norm Geisler International Ministries, 2013).
3. Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (BakerBooks, 2013).
4. Norman Geisler and David Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism: How to Listen and Speak so you can be Heard* (Harvest House, 2009).
5. Norman L. Geisler and Douglas E. Potter, *A Popular Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Norm Geisler International Ministries, 2016).
6. Norman L. Geisler and Ryan P. Snuffer, *Love Your Neighbor: Thinking Wisely about Right and Wrong* (Crossway, 2007).
7. Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Crossway, 2004)

Endnotes

1. <https://www.barna.com/research/2015-state-of-atheism-in-america/>, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/14/the-factors-driving-the-growth-of-religious-nones-in-the-u-s/>, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind/>
2. <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/are-young-people-really-leaving-christianity/>
3. <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-3-demographic-profiles-of-religious-groups/>
4. <https://www.barna.com/research/2015-state-of-atheism-in-america/>
5. <https://thestateoftheology.com/>



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