



THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Once again, it's my great privilege to bring you the report on behalf of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I wish each of you could come to 2825 Lexington Road in Louisville, Kentucky in order to see what Southern Baptists have done here—over 150 years of theological education committed to the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. With pride, Southern Seminary is the mother seminary of the SBC. We are glad that we have sister seminaries, but we feel a particular stewardship in leading the Southern Baptist Convention with the trust that has been given to us through all of these generations.

But as much as I would wish for every single one of you to come to the campus of Southern Seminary to receive the top-flight theological education in the world today, you don't have to come to this campus. You can come to us by other means. The development of our global campus means that the reach of Southern Seminary and our academic programs for the church now stretches around the world 24/7. There is no one who can be connected to the internet, who is qualified to take these courses, who does not have the opportunity to study at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and at Boyce College.

Perhaps the most incredible thing for which I am thankful is the global reach that now marks this institution. Not only through the global campus whereby we can take quality theological education everywhere in the world, but because the world is coming here. In the last 24 months, we've had students from all 50 states and from 63 different nations of the world. That's something for which we are very thankful. When you go to a chapel service or sit in a classroom at Southern Seminary, you are seeing the world come together. We feel a particular responsibility in this generation to reach the world with not only theological education, but, in particular, with the gospel of Christ, encouraging gospel churches.

One of the most exciting initiatives over the last year at Southern Seminary has been our Hispanic Initiative, whereby in North America and around the world, especially with a concentration on Latin America, we are seeking to take faithful, biblical, practical theological education where it is so desperately needed. In a world that has been so



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misshapen by the prosperity gospel, in a world in which Roman Catholicism has been the dominant religious message for centuries now, there is an incredible openness in the Latin American world. There's an incredible opportunity, and I believe Southern Baptists bear a particular and very urgent responsibility to reach Hispanic brothers and sisters in Christ, and to encourage those churches, and to also lead others to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The training of pastors is absolutely central to our mission. That's the first assignment given to us by Southern Baptists. The main mechanism whereby we do that is the Master of Divinity degree. That's the degree track for pastors in order to prepare them to lead the local church and to teach and preach the word of God. And I'm very thankful to report that we have the largest Master of Divinity not only in Southern Seminary's history but in the history of the Christian Church. There are more young men in the Master of Divinity program at Southern Seminary training for the pastorate than have ever been gathered at one place at one time in the history of the Christian Church. That is something we don't take for granted. That's the blessing of God, and for it, we are very thankful. On the strength of that program and its enrollment, we can then train others who will serve the church and in the mission field and in Christian leadership.

We have an array of degree programs. We are very careful about those programs. We keep them limited so that they can be very clear in their focus. Every single degree program, every single school and part of this institution, is directed towards the gospel of Jesus Christ and establishing gospel churches and seeing those gospel churches fed by those who have received not only a theological education of the highest quality, but also of the greatest practical impact. I'm very thankful for the academic excellence that marks Southern Seminary.

Just in recent months we have had this institution ranked in the top five Ph.D. programs in the nation. That academic excellence is something to which we are committed as an institution, not to receive the applause of the world, but in order that we may faithfully serve the churches of The Southern Baptist Convention.

As I reflect on what it means to be The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the honor of serving as its president, when I speak to Southern Baptists as I am right now, I



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want you to know that my main message is gratitude—gratitude for the investment that is being made right now in the lives of these students and in their future ministries and thus in our churches and mission fields of the world by means of the Cooperative Program. We want to do everything possible to help our students understand not only the Cooperative Program, but to be committed to it in terms of their own ministries so that successive generations will have even richer opportunities than have been theirs. We also understand that it is the sacrificial generosity of Southern Baptists that makes all of this possible.

I want to conclude this report by saying to Southern Baptists, we belong to the churches of The Southern Baptist Convention. We take as our greatest honor to serve the churches of The Southern Baptist Convention. And our word to those churches, through the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and to the convention as it itself gathers together, is always in the first, in the last, and at every point, thank you.