

THESIS

Packet

The Thesis Capstone Option is an 18,000-20,000 word, 50 page research paper (including notes and bibliography) on a topic of interest in the student's field of concentration. Theses are completed in the context of a 3 credit hour directed study. The thesis option is available to students in all MAR degree programs, and to MDiv students who wish to use this option to complete 3 hours of elective credit in a field of interest. The thesis will be graded using the CBS Capstone Assessment Rubric (attached) and should provide evidence that the student has met the appropriate CBS degree program requirements for graduation. Because the thesis is a capstone experience, students may not enroll for thesis credit until they have completed ½ of the coursework toward their degree.

Thesis Process Overview:



Steps and Policies:

- ✓ Step 1: *Complete ½ of total coursework for your degree program.*
 - Note that this coursework must be successfully completed *before* the semester in which you enroll for thesis credit.
- ✓ Step 2: *Secure a thesis advisor and identify a topic.*

When? Begin working on this step at the beginning of the semester *before* the semester in which you plan to begin work on your thesis. If you plan to begin your thesis in the fall semester, approach prospective advisors at the beginning of the preceding spring semester.

 - Your advisor will help you identify and limit the scope of your topic.
 - Work with your advisor to develop a general outline of the flow of your argument.
 - Note that each faculty member can advise only a limited number of theses each year. You may be placed with an advisor other than your first choice.
- ✓ Step 3: *Prepare a Thesis Proposal.*

When? Your thesis proposal **must be approved by the MAR Assessment Team before you can enroll for thesis credit**—there will be no exceptions to this rule. Practically speaking, this means that you should finish your proposal in the semester before the semester in which you intend to enroll for thesis credit. If you plan to enroll for thesis credit in the fall semester, you should complete the proposal during the spring; in some cases, however, your advisor may tell you to write the proposal during the summer, in which case it may be reviewed and approved at the August meeting of the MAR Assessment Team (see Step 4 below).

 - The general guidelines for preparing a thesis proposal are included in this packet. Note that your advisor may suggest minor emendations to these guidelines based on your specific topic and line of argument.
 - The proposal is not finished until your advisor is entirely confident of the thesis statement, the outline of content, and the overall presentation. Plan to complete several revisions of the proposal based on your advisor's feedback.
 - Because the proposal will likely go through several revisions, plan to submit the first draft of the proposal to your advisor at least six weeks before the date on which you plan to submit the proposal for committee review (see Step 4 below).

- A thesis proposal does *not* seek to identify a topic for discussion or a broad research question; the proposal should indicate the specific point that you seek to prove and the series of steps your argument will take in support of your thesis statement. Put another way, the proposal should not have an exploratory feel; rather, it should be a preliminary summary of the thesis paper. As a result, your proposal must demonstrate that you have already conducted preliminary research on the topic.

✓ Step 4: *Defend Thesis Proposal.*

When? After you and your advisor have come to an agreement on the final revision of your proposal, you will submit your proposal to the MAR Assessment Team for review. You will then appear before this committee to defend your proposal; the dates on which this interview may be scheduled will be published at the beginning of each academic year. After the interview, the committee will either a) approve the proposal as presented, perhaps with recommendations to you and your advisor for possible improvement; or, b) request that you revise the proposal as per the committee's instructions and resubmit it for another review. Once your proposal is approved, the committee will provide you with a signed form that must be presented in order to register for thesis credit.

- **You may not enroll for thesis credit until you have completed the proposal defense and received the signed form from the committee.** No exceptions will be made to this rule.
- During the interview, committee members may ask questions relating to a) your reasons for selecting this thesis topic; b) the nature and scope of the topic (is this topic defensible, and is it too broad or too narrow for a project of this length?); and, c) the structure of the proposed argument (does your proposed argument seem capable of demonstrating your claim?).
- The committee will wish to see a clear statement of your thesis idea and the way in which you plan to prove your point. If the proposal seems speculative, if the goals seem unclear, or if you are not certain of the specific outcome, the proposal will be rejected.
- The committee will assume that the proposal has undergone several rounds of revision and that it comes with the recommendation of your faculty advisor (see notes on Step 3 above). If the proposal itself or your responses to interview questions suggest that this is not the case, your proposal will be rejected.
- The recommendations and conclusions of the Assessment Team are not subject to appeal.

✓ Step 5: *Enroll for thesis credit.*

When? After receiving the Thesis/FRP Proposal Approval Form from the committee, enroll for credit. The thesis must be completed within two semesters of the approval of the proposal. For example, if your proposal is approved in the spring semester, the thesis must be completed by the end of the following spring semester; if your proposal is approved in the fall semester, it must be completed by the end of the following fall semester. You need not enroll for the thesis course credit in the semester immediately following approval of the proposal.

- You may begin working on the thesis immediately upon successful completion of the proposal defense. This is true even if you decide to delay registration for the thesis course credit. For example, if you successfully defend your proposal in May, you can begin work on the thesis immediately, even if you prefer to wait to enroll for the thesis credit during the following spring semester.
- Your thesis will be bound and catalogued by the CCU library, and will also be distributed electronically through the TREN network (see Step 7 below). A number of fees are associated with this process; these **fees will be charged to your account** when you register for thesis course credit. These fees will be in addition to the normal tuition rate for the 3 hour thesis course.

✓ Step 6: *Write the thesis.*

When? As noted above, you may begin writing the thesis, under your advisor's supervision, as soon as you receive formal approval from the MAR Assessment Team. The thesis must be completed within the timeframe indicated in Step 5 above. Talk to your advisor about a specific schedule of deadlines relevant to your project—the specific project schedule will be entirely at your advisor's discretion. *The final draft of the*

*thesis, along with all relevant forms and front matter (see Step 7 below), must be submitted to your advisor by **May 1** (for spring graduation) or **December 1** (for fall graduation).* The thesis document itself (minus the relevant forms and front matter) must also be submitted in electronic form by the same date.

- Theses will typically require one to several major revisions before final approval. Be sure to work closely with your advisor to insure that all deadlines are met.
- Theses are not complete until they have been correctly formatted according to the form and style specifications preferred by the relevant academic department. Consult with your advisor to determine the preferred form and style guidelines before you begin writing.
- A completed thesis will include as front matter, in the following order:
 - a title page
 - a personal *Vita* that includes at least the following information: full name; address; educational background (including CCU MAR/MDIV); professional background; relevant awards and honors. **See the sample *Vita* included in this packet.**
 - a 300 word (maximum) abstract that summarizes the thesis statement and main points of the argument. **See the sample *Abstract* included in this packet.**
 - Complete a *Copyright Agreement*, included in this packet.
- A completed thesis will include a list of Works Cited at the end of the document, which will include full bibliographic information for all sources cited in the discussion. The Works Cited list should include only works that are specifically cited in footnotes elsewhere in the document and, where relevant, source documents that are cited in the main body of the discussion (primarily historical documents such as the works of Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Westminster Confession, the US Constitution, etc.).

✓ **Step 7: Submit the Thesis.**

When? After final approval from your advisor, and before the deadlines indicated in Step 6 above, submit the thesis in both hardcopy and electronic forms to your advisor. The hardcopy version must include all materials noted in Step 6 above, as well as the completed TREN distribution agreement and catalogue information forms included in this packet. Two hardcopy versions of the thesis must be submitted; these copies must be printed on 20 pound weight acid-free paper.

- The library will bind and keep the two sets of hardcopy pages that you submit – the library will not make your personal copies for binding. The two hardcopies described above will be bound and catalogued in the CCU library.
- If you wish, you may purchase additional bound copies of the thesis. The library will order and ship these for you, but you must pay for these extra copies yourself and must provide hardcopy pages for binding. For example, if you wish to purchase 3 bound copies of the thesis for personal use, you must provide the library with 5 hardcopies of the thesis on 20 pound weight acid-free paper; 2 of these 5 will be bound for use by the library, while 3 will be shipped to you. You must pay for the 3 extra copies. Please speak with the CCU library office if you are interested in having your own copies bound.
- The thesis and its content are your own intellectual property, so you may print, bind, and distribute copies of the thesis in any form you wish at your discretion. Specifically here, you may wish to secure extra bound copies from publishing sources other than those provided by the library. No special permission is required for this option. The library, however, will *not* accept these alternate binding options; you must provide the library with the hardcopy manuscripts described above.
- Your advisor may, at his or her discretion, require you to provide her or him with a bound copy of your thesis. In this instance, you must provide the extra hardcopy for binding and pay for the binding, or provide your advisor with a bound copy secured from a publishing source other than that provided by the library.

✓ Step 8: *Grading*.

When? After you have submitted hardcopy and electronic versions of the thesis, including all materials described in the preceding steps, your advisor will report a grade for completion of the thesis course credit. You cannot graduate until this grade has been submitted.

- Note that you will not be permitted to graduate until *all* the materials described in this document have been submitted in a satisfactory form. Put another way, your faculty advisor cannot submit a grade for the thesis course credit until all the steps described in this document have been completed.
- All theses will be scored using the CBS Capstone Assessment Rubric attached to this document. *You must receive a minimum average score of “3” in order to receive thesis course credit.* Take time to review the rubric before you begin writing; this will give you a sense of the general expectations for the project.
- Theses that do not receive a minimum average score of “3” may be revised and resubmitted.
- If you feel that your project has been graded in an unfair way, and/or you cannot reach an agreement with your faculty advisor on the final grade, you may appeal the grade to the MAR Assessment Team. In instances of appeal, all members of the committee will grade the thesis using the attached rubric. After collaboration, the committee members may revise the final grade at their collective discretion. Neither the student nor the faculty advisor will appear before the committee in such cases; the thesis will be graded solely on its own content and merits.
- In cases where the grade under appeal is unsatisfactory to receive course credit – i.e., if the minimum average score is less than “3” – the student may not receive course credit, and thus may not graduate, until the MAR Assessment Team has reached a conclusion.
- There is no “second appeal” that would override the decisions of the MAR Assessment Team.

Thesis Proposal Guidelines

The thesis proposal is a 1500–2000 word document that indicates your thesis statement (the point you seek to demonstrate), outlines and summarizes your proposed argument for defending this claim, and identifies a preliminary research bibliography. Essentially, the proposal should function as a preview of the larger thesis to follow. Your thesis proposal may follow a variety of outlines, but be sure to cover all areas and issues mentioned in this document. Ultimately, consult with your advisor as to his/her preference for the organization of the material.

1. Introduction to the Topic:

The first section of the proposal should introduce the topic under consideration in ca. 500-1000 words. Survey the issues under consideration and indicate why the topic is significant. Feel free to explain the reasons why you wish to explore this issue, especially if the topic is of personal significance. Overall, this introductory section will read like a mini term paper, and may (but need not necessarily) include quotations or other citations of relevant sources.

The first sentence of the proposal should state the thesis under consideration succinctly. It should open with the formula, “This thesis will demonstrate that . . .”. The word “demonstrate” may be replaced with an equivalent active verb, such as “show,” “argue,” or “prove.” For theses involving a practical application, an opening formula such as, “This thesis will develop a model for . . .”, or, “This thesis will develop and present a program . . .”, is appropriate. Avoid vague terms such as “explore,” “survey,” and “investigate whether.” Theses are not about exploring something; they are about proving something through careful research and coherent argument. The opening sentence of the proposal states exactly what you will research and prove.

Examples:

“This thesis will argue that Jesus’ actions in the Temple Incident reflected both political and theological concerns.”

“This thesis will demonstrate that the suppression of the Knights Templars resulted from motivations that were primarily economic rather than religious.”

“This thesis will develop and describe a divorce intervention program relevant to the needs of First Christian Church.”

2. Outline and Summary:

The second section of the proposal should provide a 1-2 paragraph summary of each section of the paper and the links between them. *Taken as a whole, these summaries should reveal the development of a consistent line of reasoning, leading to a well-informed conclusion.* Essentially, Section 2 is a paraphrase of what you expect the final version of the thesis to look like. Where relevant, quote or cite appropriate sources.

Each summary should begin with a formula such as, “Part 1 will introduce . . .”, or, “In Part 3, the arguments in favor of . . . will be surveyed and . . .”, or “Part 4 will survey . . . with emphasis on . . .”, or “Part 2 will argue that . . .”, or “Part 5 will apply the results of the preceding discussion to . . .”. Each summary should include a brief discussion of the basic conclusions you intend to reach in that section of the paper. Taken together, the section summaries should evidence a logical progression of thought from section to section in support of your conclusion.

Example: Part 2 will survey the works of J. Louis Martyn, Raymond Brown, and John Painter, the three most significant proponents of the “Developmental Approach” to the Gospel of John. Each of these scholars argues that the current version of John is in some way the product of a long series of revisions in the face of the changing situation of the Johannine Community. Brown, for example, sees five major stages in John’s development, while Painter argues for a more complex reworking of the material to emphasize the theme of “the quest.”

Many theses will naturally follow a five-stage outline:

- Part 1 – Introduction; Thesis Statement; History of Research (if relevant); Overview of Discussion
- Part 2 – Presentation and Discussion of Raw Data; Analysis of Opposing Points of View (if relevant); Description of Methodological Framework (if relevant)
- Part 3 – Critical Analysis of Raw Data; Clear Statements of Your Personal Conclusions on the Relevant Issues
- Part 4 – Application of Your Personal Conclusions to the Text or Issue Under Consideration
- Part 5 – Summary and Conclusions
- Bibliography

Some theses that pursue issues of history will be organized chronologically or topically. In this case, be sure that your section breaks reflect divisions of time that are recognized within the field.

- Part 1 – Introduction; Statement of Thesis; History of Research (if relevant); Overview of Chapters
- Part 2 – Period 1/Topic 1
- Part 3 – Period 2/Topic 2
- Part 4 – Period 3/Topic 3
- Part 5 – Summary and Conclusions
- Bibliography

With any outline, be sure that the final section of the thesis summarizes your conclusions and application while providing an answer for every question or issue raised in the introduction. In other words, be sure that the introduction and conclusion are balanced.

3. Bibliography:

Your proposal should include 2-3 pages of available resources (provide full citation information) that you intend to consult as you begin your research. Any sources cited in the proposal itself should be included. Note that this bibliography will not be binding; it simply demonstrates that you are aware of the relevant literature in the field and that you will be capable of locating the necessary resources to support your research without extensive help from your advisor.

Be sure that your bibliography adequately covers all relevant sections of your thesis. For example, the bibliography for a theology thesis that seeks to demonstrate whether some aspect of Zwingli's doctrine is biblically accurate should include resources relevant to history (Zwingli), theology (the doctrinal point under consideration), and biblical studies (commentaries and reference books needed to produce the supporting exegesis). As another example, the bibliography for a thesis that seeks to develop a biblical model for divorce recovery should include resources on both counseling and biblical studies.

Capstone Project Rubric

Student's Name

*Degree
Program*

Reviewer's Name

Review Date

Course

Semester/Year

Dept/Sec/Title

Project Title

Nature of Project:

Thesis _____

FRP _____

CERP _____

Competency	(0/NA)	1	2	3	4
1) Thesis/Research Question					
2) Research Design					
3) Primary Sources/Data					
4) Bibliography					
5) Integration					
6) Format					
7) Clarity					
8) Coherence					
9) Creativity					
10) Application/ Relevance					
11) Philosophy					
12) Professionalism					
13) Faith Tradition (Scripture/Theology)					
14) Degree Program Objectives					
Totals:					

Final Grade (total, divided by 14):

Final Letter Grade for project/paper:

*Final Grade = (sum of rows)/x where "x" = "the number of graded rows." A minimum average score of 3 or higher, along with a **minimum score of "2" in each category** (the individual rows in the above table), is required for successful completion of the capstone project.*

Comments:

ABSTRACT

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: A PERSPECTIVE FROM MATTHEW 5:20

THOMAS SCOTT GRIBBLE

Master of Arts in Religion

26 March 2010

Cincinnati Christian University

This thesis treats the contents of the Sermon on the Mount as authentic teachings of Jesus given in the historical context of his earthly ministry. The thesis focuses on two opposing models of righteousness: the Pharisaical model and Jesus' model. The thesis argues that the Pharisees promoted a fallacious model of righteousness and those who conformed to the Pharisaic model failed to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The thesis contends that Jesus' teachings in the Sermon specifically confronted fallacious teachings and practices of the Pharisees. Throughout the body of the Sermon, Jesus confronts specific aspects of the Pharisaic model, and he then identifies a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees giving actionable steps a disciple must put into practice in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

VITA

Thomas Scott Gribble

Masters of Arts in Religion

Thesis: The Sermon on the Mount: A perspective from Matthew 5:20

Born: March 10, 1957, Wyandotte, MI

Education:

Platte Valley Bible College	Bachelor of Arts	1996
Cincinnati Christian University	Masters of Arts in Religion	2010

Ministry:

Preacher: Lyman Christina Church; Lyman, NE 1992-1998

Missionary: Good News for Africa/222 Ministries; Mozambique, Africa 1999-2005

Professor/Administrator: Summit Christian College; Gering, NE 2005-2010

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Author Profile

Explanations

1. Full Legal Name _____
(last name)

(first name) (middle name)

2. Year of Birth _____

3. Country of Citizenship _____

4. Present Mailing Address _____

5. Future Mailing Address _____

Effective on _____
(date)

6. Email Address _____

Degree Information

1. Degree Nomenclature _____ (Abbreviation for Degree)

2. Degree Date _____ (As Authorized by Institution)

3. Full Name of School Granting Degree

Title Information

1. Exact Title of Thesis/Dissertation as it Appears on Your Title Page

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