Thirdmill Institute
Student Orientation

Thirdmill Institute exists to empower churches and local leaders globally to equip others for ministry through free certified biblical training.

What *is* the Thirdmill Institute?

For more than twenty years Richard Pratt and **Third Millennium Ministries** have been creating "Biblical Education, For the World, For Free" in the form of high quality, multimedia lessons covering the topics practically all seminaries uniformly offer in their Bible and Theology departments. These multimedia lessons have been translated into a host of languages and given freely to all who are willing to learn and desire to know God's Word better. By design, these lesson series have been produced individually and without dependence upon the other series. This has given the curriculum the flexibility needed to meet a variety of needs in multiple cultures and contexts.

The **Thirdmill Institute** introduces something new. It provides design and structure by combining these lesson series into courses to give students and trainers a more standardized experience in their learning community environments. The **Thirdmill Institute** also meets that need for structure by laying out the overall direction of the curriculum into three certificate programs. Each Certificate incorporates weekly or regular activities, all ending in a diploma for those who complete all three.

The goal of the Institute in the life of a student is threefold. First, that you would understand and assimilate the material. Second, that you would learn how to apply the material to your current and real-world ministry experience. And third, that the material would enrich your relationship with God and facilitate deeper growth with him.

What is your role as a student?

As a student, your role is to engage in the process as built out in the Thirdmill Institute. This is done by studying the material, working through the study and discussion guides, and walking with your trainer to learn how to apply it to your life and ministry, especially with the use of the Institute Badges. The video lessons themselves will do much of the teaching, the quizzes and exam will do much of the assessment, and the discussion guides will give you the prompts needed to articulate what you have learned. This requires commitment and work. At Thirdmill, we're so excited to see and hear of what God will do in your life through this process.

What is a trainer?

Our goal is that every student in the Thirdmill Institute is led by a trainer, either one-on-one or in small groups. The trainer's main job is to guide you through the process by leading your weekly small group discussion times and helping your group accomplish the action steps in the Institute Badges. Trainers are also responsible to track your progress and check the completeness of all work in order to receive the certificates and diploma.

How do you find a trainer?

You may have already been in contact with someone who would serve in the role of your trainer. If not, we can help you find one through the Thirdmill network. Please contact us at Institute@thirdmill.org. Another option could be finding someone in your church or community who would serve in this role. We do ask, however, that they go through the material as well if they haven't previously gone through it. In the rare event that no one is available, we will consider offering an unsupervised version of the certificates and diploma. Nevertheless, we highly recommend doing this with oversight and guidance through a trainer.

3 Certificates = 1 Diploma

Thirdmill Institute currently offers three distinct certificate programs that, when completed as a whole, make up the Institute's *Diploma in Christian Ministry*. The first of these is called the *Foundations Certificate*. This four-course certificate lays a solid foundation in both Bible and Theology and is where all groups should start. Once complete, groups can either work on the *Certificate in Biblical Studies*, the *Certificate in Theological Studies*, or both at the same time. This has been designed that if each course is followed in 7-11 week modules and allowing for breaks, it can be completed in three years. This can be done quicker or take longer depending on what you and your learning community decides.

The *Certificate in Biblical Studies* covers Thirdmill's remaining Old Testament and New Testament courses, while the *Certificate in Theological Studies* covers Thirdmill's remaining Theology courses. Whether you go through all of the remaining Bible courses, all of the remaining theology courses, or bounce back and forth between the two until you are finished with both is up to you as the trainer. Unlike the four-course *Foundations Certificate*, both the Bible and the Theology certificate include *five* courses.

Thirdmill Institute Course Design

Thirdmill Institute courses are a combination of Thirdmill's lesson series plus additional documents such as Study Guides, Discussion Guides, and Badges. The courses also include a weekly quiz and final exam. In an effort to standardize Thirdmill curriculum into 7-11 week courses, we have combined 1-3 lesson series in each course. For example, the Theological Foundations Course is a combination of *The Apostles' Creed* and *Building Your Theology*. By doing this, you will notice that the video lesson and manuscript content for Theological Foundations Module 7 will say that it is Lesson 1 of Building Your Theology. To prevent any potential confusion, it is important to point out this detail to your students.

The Online Classroom (institute.thirdmill.org)

The central hub of *Thirdmill Institute* is the online classroom. This is where students go to create an account, enroll in courses, watch the lessons, take quizzes, and download relevant documents. And this is where you'll be able to track your progress. The full material is also available through microSD cards and in printed format when internet isn't available.

Learning Communities

The Thirdmill Institute is designed to be done in small learning communities. Learning communities are made up of students and trainers. This can be just you and your trainer or as many other students as your trainer decides. We recommend smaller groups of 5-6. You will meet regularly with your group and this is where much of the learning will take place. It is here the many of the concepts will be solidly formed and where you will learn to apply them both to your ministry and your relationship with the Lord.

Keep in mind, we anticipate you will spend approximately three to five hours per week in study on your own and about one and a half hours a week in your group. Some courses will last eight weeks; some will last ten. And each **certificate** involves **four or five courses**.

Elements of Each Course
- **Course Guide**
- **Institute Badge**
- **8-10 Modules**
- **Final Exam**

Course Guide

Every course with **Thirdmill Institute** will include a Course Guide. This document can be found at the top of the course page and will include basic information in relation to the content and purpose of the course. In particular, it will include a course description, the goals and objectives for the course, a thematic outline of course topics, an explanation of assignments, and a list of professors/pastors who contributed to the content of the lessons.

Institute Badges

One of the distinctive features of **Thirdmill Institute** is the work your group will do on ministry badges with each course. Instructions are given with each course for the badge that has been assigned and what needs to be accomplished before that badge can be awarded. Each instruction document contains four components: an opening verse/paragraph describing the badge topic, Badge Components, Discussion Topics, and a Call to Action. Your trainer will take some time with your group each week at the beginning of the course to talk through the larger considerations presented in the discussion topics before moving on to the calls to action towards the latter portion of the course.

Badge work, both discussion and calls to action, should take up part of your weekly discussion in your groups every time you meet. Your trainer will draw upon their understanding of the badge topic to both facilitate the badge work and give the final stamp of approval upon completion of the Badge Criteria. Once the criteria have been met, your trainer can check off that you have completed it. Badges include topics like *teaching, leadership*, and *church life*, *prayer, evangelism*, and the *devotional life* and more.

<u>**Elements of each Module**</u>
1. **Video lessons/ Manuscripts/Audio**
2. **Study Guides**
3. **Quizzes**
4. **Discussion Guides**

1. Video lessons/Manuscripts/Audio

At the heart of any curriculum is the content that is presented and the manner in which that content is delivered. *Thirdmill Institute* is blessed to have access to the best in multimedia biblical curriculum through *Third Millennium Ministries*. Each week you will watch, read or listen to a single lesson that includes award-winning graphics, interviews from pastors and professors around the world, and solid biblical teaching.

2. Study Guides

While *Thirdmill* lessons are written in a clear and understandable style, they still involve topics that are sometimes difficult to understand. At the same time, a single lesson might include quite a bit of information, many times more than would be covered by a professor in a classroom over a number of classes. In order to help you work through the materials intentionally and thoroughly, we've provided study guides for each module. Each study guide is divided into sections with time codes that correspond to the main categories covered in each module. Sections contain two main components: an **Outline for Taking Notes** and **Review Questions**. You should utilize the **Outline for Taking Notes** while you watch the video lectures, and then answer the **Review Questions** in preparation for the module quiz. Often students will open up two windows on their computers. One window will be used to watch the lesson, while the second window can be used to take notes on the study guide. If you prefer to print out the study guide in order to take handwritten notes, we suggest that you add in some spaces before printing so that you have sufficient room to write in your notes.

3. Quizzes

Each module includes a 20-question **quiz** that will include multiple-choice, True/False, and matching questions. Once you have watched the video, taken notes, and adequately studied the material, you will need to take the quiz, which has been designed to take about 20 minutes (one minute per question). In order to achieve a passing grade and have the quiz marked as "complete," you must receive a grade above 80%. If you do not achieve at least an 80%, you may take the quiz again but must wait at least one hour before the quiz will open back up. We highly encourage you to use that hour to study before taking the quiz again. You are allowed as many attempts as necessary until they receive a passing grade.

If your trainer is using the offline version of the quizzes, they will provide you with the details of how those quizzes will be administered.

While this will ultimately be up to your trainer, we also encourage them to require students to adequately study and receive a passing grade on the quiz before they come to the weekly discussion meetings. This will ensure, at least in part, that you understand the course materials for that week and are prepared to talk about them with your group.

4. Discussion Guides

With each module, we've included ***Discussion Guides*** that your trainer will use to lead the conversation with your group each week in regards to the lessons that you have just covered. And make no mistake, it is during these conversations where you will really cement the concepts from the lessons in your thinking and gain what you need to apply them to ministry and your personal relationship with God.

Each Discussion Guide will contain two parts: **Discussion Questions** on the first page and a **Case Study** with a review statement and questions on the second page. Your trainer will have **full freedom** to use *whatever components from the Discussion Guide they would like* to facilitate the discussion, which should last about **one hour to an hour and a half**. This can vary depending on needs, cultural context and group size. Some weeks your trainer might use one discussion question and the case study. Some weeks they might use a few discussion questions, and that's it. And some weeks they might use everything. The purpose of these guides is to provide your group a tool to facilitate good, healthy, robust conversation as you seek to better understand the concepts from the lesson. Each week you will be expected to come to your weekly time having gone through the discussion guides, answered the questions and be ready to discuss them. While you don't need to answer the questions of the Case Study section of the Discussion Guide, we do recommend reading through them and come prepared to discuss them.

Final Exam

At the end of each course, we've included a 60-question **final exam** that covers the content of all lessons in that course. Like the quizzes, you must achieve an 80% before the online classroom will mark it as having "completed" the exam activity. And like the quizzes, they are free to take the exam as many times as needed in order to achieve that grade, with at least a one-hour time lapse in between attempts. We encourage you to carefully study the Study Guides in preparation for the Quizzes and Final exam.