

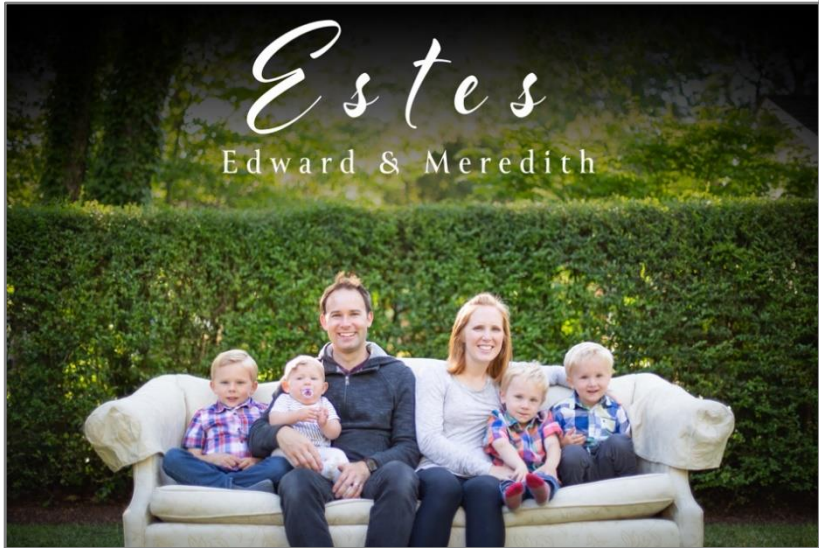
EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

John Dillinger was known as a ‘Depression Gangster.’ He led a violent gang in Chicago that looted, murdered, and defied authority. What is not common knowledge is that he spent his pre-teen years attending Sunday School yet was often disruptive. He was finally told by a teacher to straighten up or never come back to church. He did the latter. Years later, when Dillinger was killed by the FBI, a picture of only his feet appeared in a Chicago paper with these words, “Who knows where these feet might have gone if someone had guided them aright?” I wonder, what would have happened if the teacher who kicked Dillinger out of his class had chosen to take him home and love him? Though we will never know, let’s commit to reaching out to the hurting we know, and lead them to Jesus!



Thank you, Edward and Meredith

It is with both sadness and joy that we say goodbye to Edward after nine years of faithful ministry at VBTS as the Director of Admissions. The entire VBTS family has been blessed by his heart for ministry, love for the Lord, hard work ethic, pursuit of and care for prospective and new students, and his gracious spirit among his colleagues in the office. Dr. Lehner (Edward’s ‘boss’) speaks for all of us when he says, “The faculty, staff, and members of the board are grateful for the years of faithful service you have provided to the seminary since joining the staff in January of 2012. Your time at VBTS has been marked by a unique combination of talent, professionalism, humility, and a sincere desire to be helpful to everyone: applicants, students, donors, alumni, members of the board, faculty, and staff. All of us have been touched by the spirit of grace that you and Meredith have brought to the VBTS family.” We desire God’s richest blessings upon the Estes family and their new venture with the Woodard Group. We pray Phil. 1:6 will continue to be their foundation and joy: *We are confident that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ.*

Reflecting on Nine Years of Ministry at VBTS

Edward R. Estes, IV | Director of Admissions

“Seminary is the hardest thing you will ever do.” This is something that I—and countless other alumni, students, and prospective students—have heard our President say as he’s talked about seminary education over the years. Of course, he will also speak of the many benefits of seminary for aspiring teachers and pastors; however, there is no way around the fact that seminary *is* hard. And it might be the hardest thing you have ever done! But God provides for those who seek to follow His leading in their lives. It has been my distinct privilege since 2012 to watch God provide for—and sustain—VBTS students through the abundant challenges of earning a seminary degree.

The difficulty of seminary starts before the first classroom lecture. Before starting seminary, prospective students must navigate daunting questions like these: How will I pay for seminary? Where can I find a job that works with my class schedule? Where will I live? How will I juggle work, school, family, and ministry? And for those who like to have everything lined up perfectly (which is most of us!), the uncertainty of how these important details will come together seems like an insurmountable obstacle.

Since most students decide to attend seminary with some type of housing, employment, and/or financial uncertainty, it has been my privilege to watch God provide for each student who took a step of faith and decided to attend VBTS. Though the details were far from clear, they simply had to trust that God would provide. And He did! Sometimes God provided well in advance, and sometimes at the last minute. Often his provision was through unexpected means, from a source they never imagined. Some students transitioned to seminary with relatively few challenges; however, most faced a rocky move. But one of the greatest joys of my position at VBTS has been to watch God faithfully provide for all of our students again and again.

The most difficult part of seminary is often unrelated to academics. I must first clarify that the academic side of seminary *is* difficult. The reading and writing requirements are demanding. Extra hours of study might result in fewer hours of sleep, but the time of study in the Word is incredibly rewarding to those seeking to know their Savior better and deepen their love for Him. God’s Word is truly “sweeter than honey in a honeycomb” (Ps 19:10); and when His Words abide in the students and they obey His commands, they experience fullness of joy (Jn 15:7–11).

The most difficult part of seminary often takes place outside of the classroom or library. And these difficulties might look exactly like those of our brothers or sisters not in seminary—a hectic job, a strained relationship, infertility, unexpected death, parenting struggles, financial uncertainties, or sickness. The list could go on, but these life challenges, paired with the stressful deadlines of an academic semester, will make seminary feel like “the hardest thing you will ever do.” Seminary students regularly feel that they can’t go on, from their first semester to their final semester. But as graduates walk across the platform at VBTS and into the next phase of life and ministry, they are able to look back and see how God’s grace was sufficient for them and that His strength was “made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). What an encouraging and stabilizing truth for their future ministries in local churches around the world!

I thank the Lord I have had a front row seat for over nine years to watch Him faithfully provide for—and sustain—our students through the “hardest thing they will ever do.” Each student’s story of God’s provision and sustaining grace has been faith-building for me, and I believe it has also been for our students and graduates, as well as for those who will sit under their ministries.