



# PhD in Practical Theology

## **The PhD in Practical Theology at Master Builder Christian International University...**

Is a 60-credit program designed to integrate theological concepts with real-world leadership applications. This program includes 40 credits from the successful completion of the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) Program from MBCIU along with a five-credit course “Towards a Development of Theology in Culture” along with a fifteen-credit “Dissertation or Major Project”. Students will engage in scriptural analysis, comprehensive literature reviews, and practical applications, emphasizing the connection between belief and practice to address contemporary issues. The dissertation/project demands approximately 75,000 words and at least 75 references, 25 of which must be recent. This program prepares graduates to contribute to both academic scholarship and practical ministry.

**Credits:** 40 from DMin Program at MBCIU + 20 for Course (5) and Dissertation/Project (15)

## **Practical Theology Overview**

Practical theology explores applied faith to Christian living, integrating theological concepts with real-world application. It emphasizes the connection between belief and practice, aiming to address contemporary issues through a theological lens. For Master Builder Christian International University’s PhD in Practical Theology, this approach grounds the dissertation or major project in scriptural analysis, literature review, and practical applications. Students will explore how theological principles inform leadership and educational practices, ensuring their research is both theological sound and practically relevant, contributing to both academic scholarship and real-world ministry.

## Applied Leadership in Ministry, Organizations, and the Community

Theological reflection enhances leadership by integrating faith with practical actions in various contexts:

### 1. Ministry Leadership

- Spiritual Discernment: Use prayer and scriptural insights to guide decisions.
- Pastoral Care: Reflect on Jesus' ministry to provide compassionate care and guidance.

### 2. Organizational Leadership

- Ethical Decision-Making: Ground policies and practices in biblical principles.
- Vision and Mission: Develop organizational goals that reflect Christian Values.

### 3. Community Leadership

- Social Justice: Address community needs through a theological lens, promoting justice and compassion.
- Cultural Engagement: Engage with diverse cultural contexts through inclusive and relevant theological reflections.

This holistic approach ensures that leadership is both theologically informed and practically effective.

## Core Courses:

### DM 815: Towards a Development of Theology in Culture (5 Credits)

The overall objective of this course is to develop a church-based approach to the task of mastering the Scriptures and then to bring them to bear on the life and problems of churches who are living and ministering in their cultures and to be able to do so at a critical level—that is at a level of awareness of the immediate cultural and global trends that bear on the shaping of men's worldviews. Specifically, this means that each person studying the course would:

- Develop a firm conviction of the need for the church to return to the center of the theological enterprise; and the importance of the study of theology to the life of the leaders and the communities of faith themselves, so that they can address cultural and global issues with clarity and relevance— both as a form of kerygma (proclamation of the gospel) and of *didache* (teaching).
- Develop a clear understanding of what Paul meant by the perpetual passing on of the deposit, and what the role of getting in-depth training and developing critical thinking by faithful men, is over an extended period of time, with the view that these faithful men would keep churches, and whole movements of churches on course, thus creating a perpetual preservation of the apostles' doctrine.

- Develop an understanding of theological encyclopedia (what ought a minister of the gospel to study and in what order); and develop an integrated approach to the theological disciplines which will allow a logical and effective access to existing resources.
- Gain an understanding of the tremendous shifts that are taking place in theological studies at this time in history, and the different traditions which are attempting to become the dominant new paradigms; and to develop a method for building a belief framework and doing theology in culture, which is both culturally relevant and remains true to the apostolic faith.
- Develop the perspective and method for guiding others to build their own belief framework and begin build a contemporary belief framework in his own cultural setting, including an extensive doing categorization for doing theology on an ongoing basis within that framework, as well as theology in their cultures.

## PH 900: Doctoral Dissertation or Major Project (15 Credits)

### *Doctoral Dissertation or Major Project*

An MBCIU doctoral dissertation or major project is not intended to be a traditional academic dissertation. Rather, it is intended to be an artifact (tool) that is of immediate practical value in the support of church-based theological education for a specific church, network, and/or ministry organization.

The official description of the *MBCIU Doctoral Dissertation or Major Project* states that it is "the culminating product of the program and makes a substantive contribution to the progress of church-based theological education." In fact, it is the outcome of a program of study anticipated in the admissions process with qualifications such as "expressed interest in advanced development of competencies associated with understanding and making a substantial contribution to the implementation of the philosophical foundations of church-based theological education."

Like the culminating doctoral major projects in other institutions, the MBCIU doctoral dissertation or major project artifact demonstrates a thorough understanding of a field of study (church-based theological education) and contributes to the field based on advanced and specialized expertise. These artifacts are unique and could only be produced by their authors as they are the leading experts for implementation of church-based theological education in their particular contexts.

The doctoral dissertation or major project artifact will be produced according to four stages (represented by four courses and assessment processes).

***Doctoral Dissertation or Major Project Idea:*** Consideration of major project ideas in light of biblical theology in culture.

***Doctoral Dissertation or Major Project Proposal:*** Development of an approved proposal and outline for making a substantive contribution to church-based theological education.

***Doctoral Dissertation or Major Project Rough Draft:*** Development of a rough draft of a substantive contribution to church-based theological education.

**Doctoral Dissertation or Major Project Final Draft and Defense:** Production of a final draft of a substantive contribution to church-based theological education, including a formal defense before peers and a doctoral project committee.

**Doctoral Dissertation or Major Project Idea: Consideration of major project ideas in light of biblical theology in culture.**

### **Objectives:**

1. Consider various ideas for the Major Project.
2. Select one idea for more serious consideration.
3. Anticipate the Major Project in terms of purpose, resources, research methods, format, and structure.
4. Obtain approval to proceed with the proposal/outline for the Major Project Idea.

### **Requirements:**

1. Submit a 1–2-page (250-500 word) statement of the idea of the artifact you would like to do for your Major Project. The idea should include:
  - a. The type of artifact (book, manual, course, implementation plan, dissertation, other) and the topic (1 sentence).
  - b. The need
  - c. Possible mentors
  - d. Possible research to be done
  - e. Possible paradigm issues to address
2. Participate in a private discussion with faculty) for consideration of Major Project Ideas.

### **Assessment Criteria:**

- Clarity: Is it crisp and readable?
- Ministry Relevance: Does it address a real need in one's ministry context?

### **Formats:**

Do you intend to produce a book, manual, course, implementation plan, dissertation, or other type of artifact? There are important differences. For instance, many of the Ideas and Proposals refer to themselves as Manuals, but they are really Books because they are entirely a presentation of content without a structure that facilitates use of their parts.

1. **Book.** A book is primarily a presentation of ideas. It needs to flow logically and provide substantiation, both in terms of development of ideas and in interaction with other resources.
2. **Manual.** A manual is a reference tool that gives you what you need to implement, operate, and fix something. Thus, a manual should be organized for easy access to sections as

needed. It probably should include assessment tools to diagnose problems and measure success.

3. **Course.** A course is characterized by a developmental process. It should contain substantial content (or refer to it elsewhere), but it is mostly about doing something with that content. It should have clear objectives/outcomes, lessons, and assessment tools related to those objectives/outcomes.
4. **Dissertation.** You may do an exhaustive survey of literature in an area, identify a gap, and conduct a research project to fill in that gap.
  - Literature-based - APA Format
  - At least 75 references (25 - within the past 10 years)
  - Approximately 75,000 words or 100 pages (not including front matter and references).
  - Contributes to academic scholarship and practical ministry

Although the artifact is the result of a thorough consideration of biblical theology in culture and paradigm issues, the artifact itself may not contain all of this content. It is likely that the artifact will need to be accompanied by a supporting document that shows how your thorough consideration of biblical theology in culture and paradigm issues have shaped the artifact.

### ***Comparison of Dissertations and Artifacts:***

A **dissertation** typically has the following parts/chapters:

- Introduction (to give background).
- Literature review (to survey the field of research and identify a gap).
- Research proposal (to fill in the gap).
- Findings (to report on the research results).
- Conclusion (to summarize and point to the next steps).

An MBCIU Major Project is an **artifact**:

- With practical value (think of it as a tool, not an academic paper);
- Needed by you, your church/network/organization and beyond; and
- Something perhaps only you can provide because of your unique situation and position.

"Making a valuable contribution based on your unique abilities, situation, and perspectives."

"An artifact is something almost all leaders in your church/network/organization should use. In fact, it should be something that they are eagerly waiting to use."

**Both** are:

- Culminating products of thorough study of a field; and
- Advanced research-based contribution to a field.

### ***Common Critiques of Artifact Ideas:***

Most people come up with good ideas. However, they usually have a shortcoming and/or need refinement as you proceed to the Proposal Phase. Here are some of the most common areas that may need development. You should carefully read and consider each of them.

These items can be of great value in making progress in the next phase of development of your Artifact, helping it to be shaped into what it needs to be for maximum benefit to you, your church network, and beyond.

1. **Continuation of previous ministry.** There is nothing inherently wrong with the continuation of previous ministry, except that it is easy to grab this idea without allowing yourself to think freshly based on the eye-opening nature of the MBCIU resources, your experience with others in the cohort, and the other needs of your network or organization.
2. **Not strategic enough.** Some seem to have picked topics because of personal interest and/or a sense of "do-ability." While there may be a matter of stewardship of time and energy, this is not primarily an academic exercise to obtain a paper credential.
3. **Too comprehensive.** Some set out to provide a master plan for an entire country, network, or organization. However, they do not have a position of top leadership that calls for this sort of comprehensive effort. Thus, they need to be commended for this task by top leaders or find a significant, but less comprehensive contribution.
4. **Not comprehensive enough.** Conversely, top leaders probably should focus on more comprehensive matters, not smaller matters or things that could be done by others in their network or organization.
5. **No MBCIU influence.** Although you don't need to be explicit about the impact and role of MBCIU resources during the Idea Phase, you will need to do so in the Proposal/Outline Phase, so make sure to keep this in mind.
6. **No CBTE.** The MBCIU's PhD in Practical Theology program has a focus on Church-Based Theological Education (CBTE). Although you don't need to be explicit about CBTE during the Idea Phase, you will need to do so in the Proposal/Outline Phase, so make sure to keep this in mind, particularly with the broad definition of CBTE used by MBCIU.
7. **Paradigm issues.** Again, although you don't need to be explicit about the paradigm issues during the Idea Phase, you will need to do so in the Proposal/Outline Phase. In most cases, your idea is something that most people value and seems good to them. Then, why hasn't it already been done? You should attempt to identify (or propose research to find) the deep-seated reasons why your idea has not been accomplished already because these are likely to be paradigm issues that will be significant obstacles to the implementation of your idea.
8. **Paradigm repentance.** It is tempting to point the finger elsewhere when identifying the paradigm issues that need transformation. However, it is likely that some of those paradigm issues are deep within you. For instance, why haven't you already had more impact in the area you have identified as your idea? Perhaps it is because of external obstacles, but it is probably also due in part to internal issues, such as not being truly convinced of its legitimacy, choosing to take the easy way for years (and not being willing to

pay the price), or not really understanding some aspect of the Way of Christ and the Apostles. Often, paradigm transformation in a network or organization begins with paradigm repentance by its leaders.

9. **Not merely implementation.** Some Ideas seem like ministry plans that simply call for the use of MBCIU resources in the manner suggested by MBCIU. Although you don't need to be explicit about it during the Idea Phase, you will need to do so in the Proposal/Outline Phase, so make sure to be thinking about how to dig into the paradigm issues and other unique logistical issues related to successful implementation in your context.
10. **Not integrated.** Often, an idea is very narrowly focused on an area of ministry. However, a ministry rarely can be effective in its area without being integrated well with other areas. For instance, the best youth ministry effort will fail if it is just youth ministry leaders working with youth. Youth ministry according to the way of Christ and His Apostles must be linked to the ministry of churches and families.
11. **Not church based.** It is surprising how little emphasis on church is present in some Ideas. If the Idea is not closely linked to the central institution of the church (and church networks), then it will need to be addressed during the Proposal Phase.

### ***Next Steps for Artifact Proposal/Outline:***

1. **Discuss your idea with the top leaders** of your church network or organization. This is no mere academic exercise. You are producing an Artifact that needs to be of value to you and your context, but also beyond. God has provided these other leaders to provide guidance, insight, and feedback regarding your contribution. It is important that you have this interaction before you move too far, as it is likely that you will need to consider other Ideas.
2. **Start trying to identify paradigm issues** (or how you are going to find them). What deep-seated, perhaps previously unseen things, have been exposed using the MBCIU resources? Why haven't you previously made progress in this area, even though you and others may have espoused support for it? What are the structural impediments to making progress? What are the theological impediments?
3. **Start thinking in terms of an outline.** What will your Artifact look like? How will it flow from beginning to end? What parts need to precede or follow other parts? What may be needed as appendices for an Artifact to support or explain its contribution? During the Proposal Phase, you should do serious work on a preliminary outline. If you master the outline process now, it will become your slave later and help you know how everything you are working on relates to your Artifact.
4. **What are the most relevant MBCIU resources to your Artifact?** Courses contribute the most to the shaping of your Artifact. How do others contribute in lesser, supportive roles?
5. **What research do you need to do?** What books, articles, and websites do you need to study to help you develop your Artifact? What field research do you need to do to show the need for your Artifact, help shape your Artifact, and establish a baseline for assessment of the impact of your Artifact?

## Financial Information

Degree programs are completed at the pace of each church-based educational partner and according to the development of each student. Tuition is not charged per course or credit hour for enrollment in programs, but monthly for a fixed period to spread out the costs for providing **MBCIU** services, even if completion of the program takes more time. However, tuition and fees must be paid-in-full to graduate.

The low tuition is made possible by partnership with ministries that want to invest in their own leadership development programs. **MBCIU** does not need to maintain an expensive campus or other aspects of infrastructure related to traditional campus education. A payment schedule is established upon admission. Students with financial difficulties or needing to adjust this schedule should contact **MBCIU** immediately.

## TUITION

Tuition for the MBCIU program is charged by the entire degree program. Tuition fees are established on an annual basis (See current fee schedule). Tuition fees include the provision of notes for some lectures and seminars, but do not include textbooks. Tuition for programs is to be paid monthly (or in advance) according to the schedule established upon admission. Tuition for credit for individual courses is to be paid in full in advance.

### Tuition Fee Schedule [2025]:

#### PhD in Practical Theology – 20 Semester Credit Hours + Doctor of Ministry

• <b>Registration Fee:</b>	<b>\$ 100.00</b>
• <b>Tuition Fee: \$125.00/Credit Hour (20 credits)</b>	<b>\$ 2,500.00</b>
• <b>Doctoral Dissertation/Project Fees:</b>	<b>\$ 700.00</b>
• <b>Graduation Fee:</b>	<b>\$ 300.00</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 3,600.00</b>

**Payment Plan = \$150/month for 24 months**

Ready to Enroll?

**MASTER BUILDER CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

*TRAINING LEADERS FROM NEIGHBORHOODS TO NATIONS*

7941 SW 82<sup>ND</sup> DRIVE, GAINESVILLE, FL 32608

(508) 677-5584

[RLBERNIER@MBMINISTRIES.ORG](mailto:RLBERNIER@MBMINISTRIES.ORG)

[WWW.MBCIU.ORG](http://WWW.MBCIU.ORG)