



Careers for Bible & Ministry Students

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Careers for Bible and Ministry Students

Through intensive theological studies, students in Bible and ministry programs develop skills that prepare them for a wide range of careers within both religious congregations and the general community. While many learners in Bible and ministry programs intend to become ministers or seek other leadership positions in their faith communities, they also develop advanced interpersonal, research, and academic skills that provide a strong foundation for success in the secular domain.

With a Bible or ministry degree, you also qualify for lay careers in areas like **social work, journalism, and the nonprofit sector.**

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students

In the following slides, we'll take a closer look at some common career paths for both undergraduate and graduate students with degrees in Bible and ministry studies.

These career path breakdowns include information on:

- **the types of people you work with in these positions,**
- **the degree typically required to enter the occupation,**
- **and salary information for different titles and ranks within each occupation category.**

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - Minister

What is a minister?

In Protestant denominations of Christianity, **a minister is an individual with officially recognized theological credentials who holds a leadership position in an organized congregation.**

Ministers conduct church services and preside over important spiritual occasions, such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. They also make themselves available to community members for private consultation on personal matters that require religious or moral insights.

To become a successful minister, you need:

- strong interpersonal and listening skills,
- well-developed leadership and public speaking skills,
- compassion,
- and a deep commitment to a Christian way of life.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - Minister

What is a minister?

In lay circles, people sometimes erroneously use the terms “**minister**,” “**pastor**,” and “**priest**” interchangeably. Parish-level, front-line clergy people in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern Orthodox traditions are known as **priests**. **Ministers** fill equivalent roles in most mainstream Protestant denominations, and, like priests, they must first undertake a credentialing process known as ordainment to become officially sanctioned to lead services and administer sacraments.

The term “**pastor**” usually serves as a kind of catch-all that describes priests, ministers, and others who perform similar leadership roles.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Minister**

Where do ministers work?

By and large, ministers work in churches. However, the nature of their duties may require them to work offsite, providing spiritual counsel in various locations including:

- Homes
- Private schools
- Hospitals and healthcare facilities
- Correctional institutions
- Other settings with community members who are unable to attend church

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Minister**

Which populations do ministers work with?

Ministers work primarily, though not necessarily exclusively, with members of their religious congregations. However, some ministers hold specialized positions, interfacing with at-risk or special-needs populations such as the elderly, the ill, the poor, and socially marginalized or otherwise disenfranchised individuals.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Minister**

What degree do you need to become an ordained minister?

To become an ordained minister, you need a specialized degree in divinity, ministry, or Bible studies. Candidates with degrees in other fields can sometimes earn these degrees on accelerated timelines by applying their previous studies toward advanced standing in an applicable program.

Today, most ordained ministers hold master's degrees. However, some denominational bodies accept candidates with bachelor's degrees. Many denominations also require prospective ministers to complete specialized non-degree educational programs before gaining full certification.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - Minister

How long does it take to become a minister?

The timeline for becoming a minister can vary depending on the exact requirements of your Christian denomination. However, you can generally expect the process of becoming an ordained minister to take anywhere from **roughly 5-8 years**.

Bachelor's degree programs in divinity, ministry, and Bible studies typically require 4 years of full-time study, while master's programs usually take about 3 years to complete. Upon earning their degree, candidates must complete a denominational ordination process, which may include background checks, specialized evaluations, mentoring programs, field placements, and further studies. In some cases, this can take up to 2-3 years of additional training.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - Minister

Average Salaries for Ministers

Title	Median Annual Salary
Pastor	\$48,430
Senior Pastor	\$57,501
Minister	\$49,842
Youth Minister	\$35,446

Source: PayScale

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - Chaplain

What is a chaplain?

Chaplains serve as religious representatives in secular organizations. They provide spiritual and ethical guidance, emotional and psychological support, and faith-based comfort to individuals grappling with difficult life situations, transitions, or decisions. While many chaplains hold official ministerial ordainment credentials, some organizations hire chaplains from the ranks of the lay population.

While chaplains sometimes lead prayer meetings, they do not usually direct formal worship services and they cannot administer sacraments unless they are also ordained as priests or ministers. Instead, they typically counsel community members on an individual basis or in small groups.

Becoming a successful chaplain requires:

- a great deal of human empathy,
- excellent listening skills,
- strong interpersonal skills,
- and conflict mediation capabilities.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Chaplain**

Where do chaplains work?

Chaplains work in a wide range of secular settings, including schools, hospitals and hospice care facilities, military units, private chapels, correctional institutions, businesses, and nonprofit groups. Some such organizations maintain full-time chaplains as part of their staffs, while others welcome chaplains on a part-time basis during particular hours or on certain days of the week.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - Chaplain

Which populations do chaplains work with?

While their theological training and personal backgrounds typically align with a specific denomination of Christianity, chaplains generally work with all Christians regardless of denomination. They also extend their services to lay people and those who do not identify as religious. **In essence, they provide neutral spiritual counsel to anyone in their network who needs it.**

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Chaplain**

What degree do you need to become a chaplain?

Because so many different organizations employ chaplains, educational requirements for these positions are not uniform and instead depend on the criteria specified by the hiring body.

Hospital and military chaplains typically have at least a master's degree in theology, ministry, divinity, or Bible studies. Some such employers prefer candidates with doctorate degrees. However, private sector organizations may require only a bachelor's degree; some even value volunteer, work, and personal experience above formal education. As such, they may hire chaplains who do not have formal religious vocational schooling.

Careers for Ministry and Bible Students - Chaplain

How long does it take to become a chaplain?

Chaplains are subject to less professional regulation than ministers, and their career paths can follow many different trajectories. In settings such as hospitals and the military, which generally maintain fairly demanding qualification criteria, chaplains usually need at least a master's degree and a minimum of one year of additional specialized training known as clinical pastoral education (CPE). This represents a **total of about 8 years of training, counting undergraduate, graduate, and CPE requirements.**

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - Chaplain

Average Salaries for Chaplains

Title	Median Annual Salary
Hospital Chaplain	\$47,760
Hospice Chaplain	\$46,849
Military Chaplain	\$90,000

Source: PayScale

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Missionary**

What is a missionary?

Missionaries are religious figures who bring Christian teachings to remote or underserved populations. As their title implies, they carry out religious missions to spread the word of God, often through community service and development initiatives.

Unlike ministers, missionaries do not necessarily hold official status within the church. In many cases, these positions do not require licensure, ordination, or other advanced certifications. Instead, missionaries must simply have a full commitment to Christian values and a strong desire to spread the Christian faith. Because missionaries often work with people in abject poverty, they must also display a genuine desire to help the less fortunate and guide them toward a path of spiritual fulfillment. Additionally, foreign language capabilities often prove highly useful for missionaries.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Missionary**

Where do missionaries work?

Missionaries work in field settings, usually in developing or lesser-developed countries. In many situations, their missions focus on rural areas where Christianity has limited reach. In other cases, they work in areas with established Christian populations that require community development assistance or spiritual leadership.

Missionaries typically apply for mission placements through churches or other nonprofit religious organizations. Mission lengths vary, ranging from a few months or a year to several years, a decade, or even longer.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Missionary**

Which populations do missionaries work with?

Domestically, missionaries work with a variety of people, from students attending summer camps to concentrated populations from non-Christian religious and cultural backgrounds. International missions typically focus on economically disadvantaged parts of the world, especially in destinations where locals need help building community infrastructure. In these cases, missionaries provide spiritual guidance and leadership to forge stronger community bonds.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Missionary**

What degree do you need to become a missionary?

Becoming a missionary does not necessarily require a degree of any kind. Many people enter this field through volunteer service, accruing more and more experience over time, which enables them to secure increasingly prominent roles that offer more responsibility.

Some missionary recruitment organizations require applicants to only be at least 18 years of age, while others prefer candidates with an associate or bachelor's degree in a Christianity-oriented field of study. Missionary organizations rarely expect applicants to have advanced degrees. However, they may prefer candidates for leadership and management positions to have completed graduate school.

Careers for Ministry and Bible Students - **Missionary**

What degree do you need to become a missionary?

Aspiring Christian missionaries face few barriers to entry for these roles so long as they fulfill the basic requirements set by the placement organization. In some cases, you need to do little more than have your application approved, pass any necessary background checks, and ensure you have the paperwork and documentation necessary for travel to the destination. However, some missions require participants to complete roughly 6 months to 1 year of specialized field training, which is typically offered through the placement organization.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Missionary**

Average Salaries for Missionaries

Title	Median Annual Salary
Entry-Level Missionary	\$29,479
Late-Career Missionary	\$44,491

Source: PayScale

Careers for Ministry and Bible Students - **Professor**

What is a professor?

College and university professors design undergraduate and graduate courses of study, prepare and deliver lectures, assign and assess student work, and conduct advanced research into highly specialized areas of academic and intellectual inquiry.

The courses you qualify to teach as a ministry or Bible studies graduate depend on the specifics of your educational background, but they generally include subjects like theology, spiritual leadership, the history of Christianity, the social and cultural impacts of Christianity, and other classes that focus on advanced topics in the study of canonical Christian texts.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Professor**

Where do professors work?

Ministry and Bible studies professors work in postsecondary educational institutions, especially Christian colleges. To earn a position at a 4-year college, candidates almost always need a Ph.D. or a comparable doctoral degree. With a master's degree, aspiring professors can seek employment at community colleges and junior colleges.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Professor**

What degree do you need to become a professor?

With few exceptions, **accredited higher education institutions require ministry and Bible studies professors to hold advanced degrees.** Master's degrees may suffice for positions in community colleges and junior colleges, but 4-year universities and graduate schools tend to strongly prefer candidates with a Ph.D. or other doctoral degree. If you want to advance to become a dean, department head, or provost, you almost certainly need a doctoral designation in addition to several years of tenured teaching experience.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Professor**

How long does it take to become a professor?

Becoming a professor at a postsecondary institution typically requires **at least 6-8 years of study in undergraduate and graduate degree programs**. Candidates with Ph.D. degrees can further separate themselves from the field by completing postdoctoral studies to gain more academic credentials.

Professorial career paths typically begin with adjunct, sessional, or assistant positions. You can earn tenure consideration by building up a solid teaching record over a period of several years. Tenured professors enjoy excellent job security, academic freedom, and a variety of research opportunities.

Careers for Bible and Ministry Students - **Professor**

Average Salaries for Professors

Title	Median Annual Salary
Assistant Professor, Postsecondary	\$65,629
Professor, Postsecondary	\$86,664
Department Chair, College/University	\$83,456

Source: PayScale

Career Resources for Bible and Ministry Students

If you'd like to learn more about the career opportunities available to graduates of Bible and ministry programs, we've compiled this list of helpful guides, job boards, and professional development/placement programs.

- [Cru.org](#): Cru connects people with spiritual development resources and religious advancement programs. Through its ministry affiliations, Cru also offers internship placements and volunteer opportunities that can help recent graduates gain valuable professional experience.
- [Society of Biblical Literature \(SBL\)](#): Founded in 1880, SBL is a widely respected organization that provides a broad range of study and professional development programs. Its website also offers a job board.
- [Council for Christian Colleges and Universities \(CCCU\)](#): With more than 180 affiliated Christian higher education institutions among its voluntary membership, the CCCU provides a comprehensive career center featuring job postings from around the world.
- [Biblical Counseling Coalition \(BCC\)](#): The BCC maintains a [job board](#) focused on Biblical counseling and ministry positions in churches and non-church religious organizations. Its website also offers a wide variety of spiritual education resources.
- [Institute for Biblical Research \(IBR\)](#): IBR connects Christian students, graduates, and religious professionals with domestic and international [job openings](#). It also offers excellent networking opportunities through annual meetings and other members-only special events.
- [Association for Biblical Higher Education \(ABHE\)](#): ABHE connects various institutes of higher education that hold official Christian affiliations. The association provides institutional accreditation, advanced informational resources, and a regularly updated [job board](#).

Find Your Bible and Ministry Degree

Point University is an accredited, private, Christian university that offers a wide range of **100% online programs** in the ministry and biblical studies field.

Our convenient online programs include:

- **Christian Ministries** (Associate, Bachelor's)
- **Youth Ministry** (Associate)
- **Youth & Family Ministries** (Bachelor's)
- **Transformative Ministry** (Master's)

Find the online program that works with your career goals and your busy lifestyle at **online.point.edu**, or give us a call at **844-671-5839**.