

MNST 7190 Weak Church: Leading from Vulnerability and Authenticity

North Park Theological Seminary

May 19–July 11, 2025

Intensive meeting dates June 2–6

3 credit hours

1 Hour Lunch Break

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Peter Ahn

Peter.ahn@emetro.org

Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course invites pastors and church leaders to embrace a transformative ministry philosophy rooted in weakness. As Jesus told Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Embracing weakness is not about adopting a defeatist mindset—it’s about stepping into God’s strength to become servant leaders for God’s church. With over 1,000,000 Gen Zs leaving the church each year due to frustrations with the lack of vulnerability and authenticity, this class challenges the “strong church” model by fostering a culture of vulnerability, mutual confession, and overcoming shame. Through biblical teaching, practical tools, and shared experiences, participants will learn to minister from a theology of weakness, creating church communities that reflect Christ’s heart and resonate deeply with a generation seeking vulnerability and authenticity.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students will demonstrate the theology of weakness by developing a biblical foundation for why weakness, rather than strength, is the key to spiritual growth and a vibrant church community.
2. Students will apply how to cultivate emotional and relational health. They will learn how emotional health and deep vulnerable relationships contribute to the Weak Church vision.
3. Students will demonstrate how to preach and lead from a place of weakness. They will explore how incarnational preaching and life-on-life leadership transform both individuals and church culture.
4. Students will identify how vulnerability works in small groups. They will identify how to create small group environments that foster transparency and accountability.
5. Students will develop justice and compassion ministries through a ministry philosophy of weakness.



6. Students will identify how to build a vulnerable church staff culture. They will identify how to lead a church team that prioritizes authenticity, trust, and shared weakness.
7. Students will reflect and apply weak church principles to ministry and life. They will create a personal and ministry action plan to implement the course teachings in everyday leadership and discipleship.

REQUIRED TEXTS (MUST BE READ BEFORE JUNE 2ND)

Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006 (217 Pages).

Thompson, Curt. *The Soul of Shame*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2015 (187 Pages).

Brown, Brene, *The Gifts of Imperfection*. Minnesota: Hazelden Publishing, 2010 (130 Pages)

Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. New York: Random House, 2020 (395 Pages).

SCANNED MATERIAL¹

Ahn, Peter. *The Weak Church: Becoming an Imperfectly Perfect Community*. Danvers: Rowman and Littlefield, 2025 (187 Pages).

Scazzero, Peter. *Grief Chart*.

ASSESSMENTS

Due Tuesday, June 2nd at 11:59pm

Grief Chart

5% of Final Grade

A Grief Chart is a tool for identifying life's significant losses and disappointments and examining how we coped with them at the time. By mapping out events such as loss, failure, or broken relationships, we gain insight into how these experiences shaped us

¹ DO NOT PURCHASE THSE MATERIALS. I will scan and upload on CANVAS.

emotionally and spiritually. This reflection helps us recognize unhealthy coping patterns, process unhealed pain, and see God's presence in our grief.

Due Friday, June 11th at 11:59pm
Manuscript Sermon for Incarnational Preaching
Bible Passage: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
15% of Final Grade

In this assignment, you will develop a full sermon manuscript based on 2 Corinthians 12:1-10, where the Apostle Paul speaks about his "thorn in the flesh" and God's power being made perfect in weakness. This passage is a foundational text for understanding the Weak Church philosophy—how embracing weakness, rather than relying on human strength, opens the door for God's grace and power to work in us.

Your sermon should be exegetically sound, theologically rich, and vulnerable in your story telling.

Please refer to Chapter 5 of The Weak Church, specifically the "Nuts and Bolts of Sermon Prep" section, for guidance on sermon preparation.

The sermon manuscript should include:

- Good exegesis.
- One central question that you are going to answer in the text.
- Two to three application points that answer the central question.
- Incorporate personal stories in each sermon point.
- Create a compelling introduction. Envision a non-believer in your congregation asking, "So what? Why should I listen to your sermon?"
- Conclusion. Your conclusion is the pinnacle of your sermon, where hearts are moved and lives are touched. Write a personal, vulnerable story that resonates deeply with your audience. Allow yourself to be open and transparent, sharing a moment of vulnerability that carries a redemptive message. Take your listeners through your Gethsemane.

Pick Two Reflection Papers:



1. Due Friday, June 18th at 11:59pm

Reflection Paper: *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* by Peter Scazzero

3-5 pages

15% of Final Grade

This reflection paper will provide you with an opportunity to engage with Peter Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (EHS). The goal is to reflect on how the themes of the book relate to your personal faith journey and your understanding of why emotional health is essential for a weak church.

Here are questions I would like you to answer:

- What specific concept(s) stood out to you? Why?
- How does EHS speak to your current spiritual journey?
- How does Scazzero's focus on emotional health align with the Weak Church philosophy of embracing vulnerability and weakness in community?
- Share a practical step you plan to take as a result of your reflection?

2. Due Friday, June 18th at 11:59pm

Reflection Paper: *The Soul of Shame* by Curt Thompson and *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brene Brown

3-5 pages

15% of Final Grade

Shame is one of the most powerful and destructive forces in human experience, shaping our identity, relationships, and even our faith. In *The Soul of Shame* and *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Thompson and Brown explore how shame operates in our lives and how God calls us to vulnerability, connection, and healing. In this reflection paper, you will engage with *The Soul of Shame* and *The Gifts of Imperfection* and examine how their themes relate to the Weak Church philosophy.

Here are questions I would like you to answer:

- How do Thompson and Brown's discussion of shame intersect with the call to weakness in the church?
- How does shame hinder or shape our ability to cultivate an authentic, Christ-centered community?
- How have you experienced shame in your own faith journey?
- How do Thompson and Brown's discussion of shame reinforce the Weak Church philosophy of embracing weakness and vulnerability in community?

- Share a personal or ministry-related step you plan to take as a result of this reflection.

3. Due Friday, June 18th at 11:59pm

Reflection Paper: *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson

3-5 pages

15% of Final Grade

In *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Isabel Wilkerson argues that beneath the concept of race in America is a powerful and enduring caste system—an unspoken social hierarchy that has shaped our history, institutions, and interpersonal relationships.

This reflection paper invites you to thoughtfully engage with Wilkerson’s work—not simply to summarize her ideas, but to wrestle with their depth, reflect on their implications, and explore how a theology of weakness might offer a redemptive path toward breaking the social hierarchies that continue to divide our nation.

Here are questions I would like you to answer:

- How did this book challenge or expand your understanding of race, privilege, or systemic inequality?
- Wilkerson compares the American caste system to those in India and Nazi Germany. What impact did this comparison have on your understanding of America’s own story?
- How does the theology of weakness—the belief that God’s power is made perfect in human weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9)—speak to the deeply rooted need for control, dominance, and superiority in caste systems?
- In what ways might embracing weakness, humility, and vulnerability serve as a radical alternative to caste-based thinking—both personally and in the church?

Due Friday, July 1st at 11:59pm

Final Paper: Weak Church Action Plan

12-15 pages

50% of Final Grade

Throughout this course, we have explored the Weak Church ministry philosophy—how embracing weakness, emotional health, and vulnerability can transform both personal faith and ministry. For this final assignment, you will develop a personal and ministry

action plan outlining how you will integrate the principles of Weak Church into your life, leadership, and church community.

This paper should be both reflective and practical, incorporating theological insights, personal application, and strategic steps for implementation. Draw from your readings of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, *The Soul of Shame*, *The Weak Church*, class notes, and Scripture to support your action plan.

This action plan is more than an academic exercise—it's a personal roadmap for transformation. Take this opportunity to reflect deeply, dream boldly, and commit fully to leading in weakness so that Christ's power may be made perfect in you (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Evaluation Criteria

Your final paper will be assessed based on the following:

- Depth of Reflection (25%) – Thoughtful self-examination and theological engagement.
- Practicality & Implementation (45%) – Clear, realistic steps for integrating Weak Church principles into life and ministry.
- Use of Course Materials (20%) – Strong integration of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, *The Soul of Shame*, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, and *The Weak Church*.
- Clarity & Organization (10%) – Logical structure and clear writing.

GRADING SCALE

A: Superior work (A = 95–100; A- = 93–94)

This grade applies to exceptional work, the quality achieved through excellence of performance, not merely the fulfillment of the course requirements.

B: Above average (B+ = 91-92; B = 88-90; B- = 86-87)

This grade applies to meritorious work, definitely above average, applied to more than the fulfillment of requirements.

C: Average (C+ = 84-85; C = 80-83; C – = 78-79)

This grade applies to average work that still fulfills the course requirements.

D: Unsatisfactory (D+ = 76-77; D = 72-75; D – = 70-71)

This grade, while indicating the student has completed a course, is to be understood as reflecting below average work. Course work receiving this grade will not be counted toward a degree.

F: Failure (69 and below)

To receive credit in the subject, the course must be repeated.

AU: Audit

Students not taking a course for academic credit will receive an AU.

P: Pass

This grade is based on evidence of completed assignments, regular attendance, and participation activities required by the instructor. A grade of P does not affect one's Grade Point Average (GPA).

F: Failure

A failing grade in a pass/fail course is calculated in a student's Grade Point Average.

Pass/fail courses become part of the student's permanent record and will be taken into account in assessing the student's level of achievement.

ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES

Attendance is required for successful completion of class.

Late submission of assignments will affect student's grade: a half grade deduction for each day late.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another's answers on an examination.

3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one's answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.
5. Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.

For additional information, see the Seminary Academic Catalog.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

TITLE IX & EQUITY

In accordance with Title IX, North Park employees who become aware of any incident of discrimination, harassment or retaliation based on sex, gender, including pregnancy or related medical conditions, and other protected classes are required by law to notify North Park University's Title IX & Equity Team by submitting a report [here](#). The Title IX Coordinator will respond and manage concerns about students. The Senior Director of Human Resources and Deputy Title IX Coordinator will respond and manage concerns about employees. More information can be obtained here: [NPU's Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#).

INCOMPLETE GRADES

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as "I" until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of "I" will automatically be changed to "F." For the full policy, see the Seminary Academic Catalog.

COURSE SCHEDULE

JUNE 2ND

Introductions



Orientation to the Course

Crisis in the Church

Weakology

Why Emotionally Health Matters in a Weak Church

Read: The Weak Church, Chapters 1-3

Assignment: Complete Grief Chart and email by 11:59pm

JUNE 3RD

Why Emotionally Health Matters in a Weak Church

SoulMates – Becoming Fully Known

Five Hungers in Leadership

Read: The Weak Church, Chapters 4

JUNE 4TH

Incarnational Preaching

Video in Class: Sermon by Peter Ahn

One on one meeting to review Grief Chart

In Class write a 15 minute incarnational sermon

Read: The Weak Church, Chapters 5

JUNE 5TH

Vulnerability in Small Group

Life on Life Leadership Development

Deep Compassion for Serving the Poor and Oppressed

Presentation: 15 minute incarnational sermon

Read: The Weak Church, Chapters 6-8

JUNE 6TH

Unwavering Commitment for Racial Justice

Creating and Maintaining a Vulnerable Church Staff Culture

Presentations: 15 minute incarnational sermon

Impartational Prayer Time

Read: The Weak Church, Chapters 9-10



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