What are the goals of a Thirdmill class?
ABOUT THIRDMILL

Founded in 1997, Thirdmill is a non-profit Evangelical Christian ministry dedicated to providing:

Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

Over the years, we have developed a highly cost-effective method of producing award-winning multimedia lessons of the finest content and quality. Our writers and editors are theologically-trained educators, our translators are theologically-astute native speakers of their target languages, and our lessons contain the insights of hundreds of respected seminary professors and pastors from around the world. In addition, our graphic designers, illustrators, and producers adhere to the highest production standards using state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.

In order to accomplish our distribution goals, Thirdmill has forged strategic partnerships with churches, seminaries, Bible schools, missionaries, Christian broadcasters and satellite television providers, and other organizations. These relationships have already resulted in the distribution of countless video lessons to indigenous leaders, pastors, and seminary students. Our websites also serve as avenues of distribution and provide additional materials to supplement our lessons, including materials on how to start your own learning community.

Thirdmill is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation. We depend on the generous, tax-deductible contributions of churches, foundations, businesses, and individuals. For more information about our ministry, and to learn how you can get involved, please visit www.thirdmill.org.
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Teachers often ask us, “What are the goals of a Thirdmill class? What purposes should I pursue as I lead my Thirdmill learning community?” When we speak of the goals of a Thirdmill class, we have in mind the broad purposes or aims that should characterize every Thirdmill learning group, no matter where it is in the world.

In many respects, the goals of teaching a Thirdmill learning community reflect the purposes of all teaching that takes place among Christians. There are many ways to describe these universal goals, but at Thirdmill we usually think in three categories:

- goals related to a student’s knowledge
- goals related to a student’s ministry to others
- goals related to a student’s personal life

Knowledge, ministry and life are highly interdependent, and different priorities apply in different situations. But in one way or another, these three goals should guide everything that happens in a Thirdmill class.

In the first place, Thirdmill teachers should always aim to enhance their students’ knowledge of the Scriptures and of sound Christian theology. It would be difficult to overemphasize this goal because knowing the Word of God is essential for every facet of the Christian life.

Rev. Hutch Garmany, Grace Community, Trenton, GA

So, there’s a tremendous need for pastors to be trained to know how to handle the Scriptures, to know how to teach and communicate those truths to their congregations, and to really be able to guard against the dangers of heresy that, even as we see in the New Testament, are one of the greatest challenges to the peace and purity of the church.

In the second place, Thirdmill teachers should aim to equip their students for ministry to others. To be sure, God calls Christians to serve other people in different ways. But, as important as it is to learn the Word of God, every student must also be able to apply this knowledge as they serve others in their marriages, their families, their churches and in the broader community.

Rev. Youssef Ourahmane, Timothy Training School, Algeria (translation)

We must encourage believers and teach them to grow deeper in the knowledge of God and in service to others. They need members of the Body, who have been taught, to share what we’ve learned so they can...
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imitate us. For example, if I teach a brother how to serve in the church, I not only disciple him through individual meetings, in learning groups, or through books, I also have to give him a chance to serve. I can give him a chance like, “What do you think about leading the praise, Brother? Or leading the church service?” We might ask him to join us in our visitations; to visit a sick friend, for example, visit brothers in the hospital, sisters in the hospital, or do a charity work, and so we take a disciple with us as we minister. Through his presence with us as we minister, he will learn more. That’s why we teach others to minister. This is, of course, very important in their lives and in their discipleship.

In the third place, Thirdmill classes should always aim toward enabling students to grow in their personal lives. The Christian faith touches every individual’s relationship with God, including how we pray and how we devote ourselves to Christ from deep within. Merely learning the Scriptures and ministering to others will fall short unless your students are also walking with the Holy Spirit.

**Dr. Ramesh Richard, RREACH/Dallas Theological Seminary**

The connection between the Spirit and the Word, it’s intrinsic; it is not extrinsic. It is internal, not merely external, and we must rely on the Spirit of God to use the man of God, delivering the word of God, to the people of God, so that God’s word and God’s world will be impacted by your delivery of Scripture.

Thirdmill provides three essential teaching and learning resources that we’ve designed to help you reach all three of these goals: our Lesson Series, our Lesson Guides, and our Application Guides. Using these essential resources will help you keep these three basic goals in view.

Our Lesson Series are designed primarily to increase your students’ knowledge of the Bible and theology. There’s a lot of information in our lessons, but if you look carefully, you’ll see that they also touch on matters related to your students’ ministries to others and to their personal lives in Christ.

Thirdmill Lesson Guides are especially good at helping your students synthesize the content of our lessons. But the Lesson Guides also include application questions. These lead students to explore the implications of each lesson for their ministries and their personal devotion to Christ.

Our Application Guides are particularly useful in helping you reach all three goals as you lead your classes. Application Guides alert you to information in our lessons that students often need highlighted in class. They also offer Case Studies to help students relate the information to their own lives and ministries. And they provide questions for in-depth discussion and activities that address your students’ ministries to others, as well as their personal lives.

For videos, lesson guides and other resources, visit Thirdmill at thirdmill.org.
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You should keep in mind that we designed Thirdmill Lesson Series, Lesson Guides and Application Guides primarily for pastors and other kinds of Christian leaders. But even if your students aren’t currently serving in these leadership roles, every Thirdmill student, whether a pastor or a lay person, is called to grow in the Christian faith in ways that are appropriate for Christian leaders. Growth in knowledge, ministry and life are basic goals that apply to every student you teach.

Beyond this, the kind of program you offer your Thirdmill learning community will impact how you implement these goals. If you’re teaching an informal program, you’re free to set and achieve your goals as you see fit. If your class follows a church-approved program, you’ll have to comply with the requirements of that program. And if your students are in a government-approved program, the national government will set a number of regulations you must meet. But even though these programs are different, the three basic goals for your class shouldn’t change.

No matter what kinds of students you teach or which kind of program you offer, every Thirdmill teacher should constantly ask, “How are my classes giving attention to the knowledge, ministries and personal lives of my students?” These three basic goals should permeate everything you do as you lead your Thirdmill learning community.