



Dispelling PLI Myths

Several years have passed since PLI first opened its cyber-doors in 2002 to offer convenient, focused, affordable, and practical ministry training; yet a few misconceptions linger. Let's look at some common myths.

Myth #1: PLI is just for middle-aged, English-speaking men.

- Fact: Students range in age from 20-something to past retirement.
- Fact: Women are also encouraged to enroll in PLI (we've had several female students, including one graduate).
- Fact: A Spanish version of PLI is available now for the Hispanic community, and we're in the process of developing courses in other languages as well.

Myth #2: PLI is exclusively for Missionary Church people.

- Fact: A few students and eProfs from other denominations have joined our ranks already; and our doors are always open to others of like faith.
- The United Brethren in Christ and Churches of God (Winebrenner Theological Seminary) accept PLI coursework for credentialing.

Myth #3: PLI is only for those preparing for full-time vocational ministry.

- Fact: Although preparing students for ministry (full-time or bi-vocational) is our main focus, PLI can equip lay leaders for continued volunteer service and move those already holding ministerial licenses toward ordination.
- Quote: *"I have seen so much growth in my life as a direct result of my time spent with PLI. It has given me a confidence that has allowed me to become a teacher and even an elder in my church."* [Mark, Indiana]

Myth #4: You must take all courses in a prescribed order.

- Fact: Some courses have prerequisites (e.g., biblical theology before systematic theology), but others can be taken in any order.
- Fact: PLI welcomes "cherry-pickers." Just choose the courses you want without committing to the whole program. You won't earn a PLI certificate of completion, but it's a great way to expand biblical knowledge or fulfill credentialing requirements when you've already begun the process elsewhere.

Myth #5: If you want to renew your missional vision, you must attend a two-week Keystone training seminar in South Dakota.

- Fact: Keystone principles are foundational to PLI's first two missional courses—Organic Discipleship Movements 1 and 2. Besides Richard Greene's video-recorded training sessions, these courses include supplemental reading and online chat discussions. Principles learned are immediately assimilated through practical application assignments.
- Fact: PLI now offers a whole track of missional courses—Organic Discipleship Movements 1 & 2, Cultural Anthropology, Spiritual Warfare Ministry—as well as others in the development stage—spiritual formation, discipleship coaching, and more.

Myth #6: PLI classes are easy.

- Fact: PLI's degree of difficulty generally falls somewhere between the Bachelor's and Master's levels. Successful students study 5-10 hours per course per week (besides internship activities and the mandatory two-hour weekly online chats).
- Quote: "Classes are demanding, they work hard, but well worth the effort." [Bob, Virginia]

Myth #7: You can't really learn much from an online class.

- Fact: PLI's online discussion-led format (rather than the lecture style of traditional education) forces students to engage the material being studied.
- Quote: "I look forward to every class and feel as though the chat sessions make the material we study easier to understand and more relevant to me personally." [anonymous student]
- Quote: "In PLI's Fundamentals of Christian Leadership course, the eProf took us far deeper in practical application than a textbook ever could. After every chat I found myself sitting at my computer trying to think of ways to apply what we had just learned." [anonymous student]

Myth #8: The need for relational interaction cannot be met without face-to-face contact.

- Quote: "I was surprised at the depth with which we were able to interact in the counseling class. Students felt free (perhaps more so because they couldn't see each other) to share significant hurts/struggles. Bonding with students and eProf certainly took place." [John Oelze, PLI eProf]
- Quote: "A PLI chat room, I have found, is exceptionally authentic. As a result, PLI students seem to be much more willing to bare their souls and share from the depths of their hearts even more than students in traditional classrooms." [Steve Ganger, PLI eProf]

Myth #9: The internship and working with a PLI coach are optional.

- Fact: Only cherry-pickers are exempt from completing PLI's internship. Anyone who wants to earn a certificate of completion must fulfill all the requirements of the internship under the tutelage of a coach.
- Fact: Even cherry-pickers are required to meet with an academic coach for some courses (e.g., theology classes) to help apply knowledge and work through difficult concepts.

Now that you know the facts, who could you refer to PLI? Is God calling you, or someone you know, to full-time ministry? Do you know people who would like to learn how to really study the Bible on their own? Are you a licensed pastor who needs to pick up a few more courses to satisfy ordination requirements? Are there teachers in your church who could benefit from Christian Ed training? Are you passionate about reaching people for Christ, yet unsure what to do next? Discover how PLI can work for you or someone in your congregation. Check out our Web site at www.PLIonline.org or contact Diana Boyer at PLIadmin@mcusa.org.

—Diana Boyer, PLI Administrator
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