



THE OBA Heartbeat

The Quarterly Newsletter of Opened Bible Academy // Vol. 1 Issue 4 Fall 2016

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Important Dates:

Spring Applications Due:	12/16/2016
For DTS Lay Institute:	1/27/2017
Spring Session Begins:	1/7/2017
For DTS Lay Institute:	2/13/2017
OBA Graduation:	1/14/2017

Current Locations:

- » OBA Central Houston:
City of Refuge Church
- » OBA North Houston:
Yehoshua Missionary Baptist Church
- » OBA South Houston:
Bible Way Fellowship Baptist Church
- » OBA East Houston:
Good Shepherd Missionary Baptist Church
- » OBA Kemah/League City/Galveston:
Fellowship Community Church
- » OBA Southwest Houston/Pearland:
Harvest Point Fellowship Church
- » OBA Northwest Houston/Cypress:
Impact Family Worship Center
- » OBA West Houston/Katy:
True Fellowship Baptist Church
- » OBA Dallas:
Dallas Theological Seminary Lay Institute

Contact: www.the-oba.org
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info@the-oba.org

Opened Bible Academy is a non-profit, donor supported **Bible academy** based in the greater Houston area. We are dedicated to offering exceptional biblical and theological training **to anyone** whom God has given the desire at absolutely **no cost** to the student.



Above: Students in a class at the DTS Lay Institute.

Academy News!

OBA Launches Classes at the Dallas Theological Seminary Lay Institute

On September 12 OBA launched classes at the Dallas Theological Seminary Lay Institute (DTS LI). This historic opportunity and privilege is still sinking in and we are so grateful to God for moving the hearts and minds of Dr. George Hillman and the executive staff of DTS to extend this invitation to OBA.

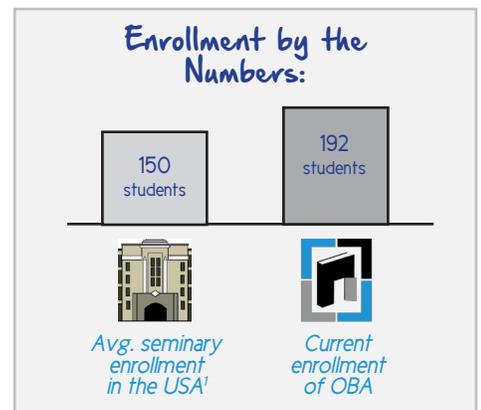


We have 27 students enrolled at the DTS LI and the DTS Student Instructors, Bill Baldwin and Bob Gresser, are amazing teachers. We couldn't ask for a better start!

Enrollment Numbers

OBA now has 192 students enrolled in Houston and Dallas—which is an incredible statistic compared to the enrollment of U.S. seminaries. According to the Association of Theological Schools' most recent annual report, OBA surpasses the average head-count of seminaries in the United States, which is 150 students.¹

According to the 2013 report, 45% of all U.S. seminaries had 150 students or less.² This makes OBA larger than 45% of all U.S. seminaries! We praise God for this tremendous growth and ask for your prayers in continuing this great work of the Lord (see following page for specific ways you can be praying).
Academy News continues on page 2



¹ATS.edu: '2015 Annual report.' <http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/publications-presentations/documents/2015-annual-report-20FINAL.pdf>, page 6.

²ATS.edu: '2013 - 2014 Annual Data Tables.' <http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tables/2013-2014-annual-data-tables.pdf>, page 14.



Avis Blake-Thomas



Tina Brown

From Our Hearts to Yours: A message from the founders

Greetings OBA Friends!

In just a few months, January of 2017, OBA will celebrate two years of operation. This milestone was preceded by three years of preparation. This means Tina and I have been working on this vision for nearly five years. When we look back to the first conversation that sparked this vision, we are humbled, grateful and amazed at God's favor. When we began to recruit for our first classes, Tina said to me: "I'll be happy if we start with 10 students." Well, we started with 50 students! God's plans for us are always grander and more amazing than what we can think and or imagine!

As we prepare to celebrate the graduation of our very first class, we are overwhelmed with joy and pride. Someone recently asked me, "how will students use what they have learned once they complete their time at OBA?" The answer is they are already using it! It warms our hearts when students tell us that they now read the Bible completely differently. They no longer rely on single proof texts, but are always looking to understand the context of the verse. They tell me they no longer read a verse in isolation, but back up as far as necessary in the chapter or chapters to make

sure they understand what is going before and after the verse. Many tell us they are teaching better and that they see themselves as life-long learners. This is what disciples look like! They continue to learn, they share what they learn and they use what they learn not only for themselves, but to help disciple others.

We certainly hope you will join us on January 14, 2017 to help us celebrate with the first OBA graduates! (For details, see right-hand story). 

From our Heart to Yours,
Avis and Tina

Partner with us in prayer!

We certainly cannot carry-out OBA's mission alone. We rely on the intercession of our faithful prayer partners.

Current Prayer Requests:

- Volunteers to serve as administrators at OBA Locations
- Upcoming OBA graduates: Pray they finish well!
- God's continued guidance as OBA expands
- God will continue to send OBA donors that share and support the vision of OBA.

OBA Inaugural Class Graduates

On January 14, 2017 we will celebrate the graduation of our inaugural class! These students have completed either our Bible College Seminary Prep Program or our Bible Exploration program. Each of these students started with OBA two years ago in January of 2015 and have taken and passed all courses in their respective programs. Many of them are already using the information they have learned at OBA as they teach in their local churches or para-church organizations. We look forward to celebrating with them on January 14th. We hope you will join us!



OBA Graduation Celebration Details:

- January 14, 2017
- 2:00 p.m.
- St. Paul's United Methodist Church: 5501 Main Street (at Binz/Bissonnet, across from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston).
- Parking is free in two lots across Fannin Street from the sanctuary. The addresses for these parking lots are 1131 Binz Street and 5500 San Jacinto Street. *Note: the church is within a block of both Museum District MetroRail stops.*

Staff Updates

Please join us in welcoming the following new staff members to OBA.

Instructors:

- Daniel Blair, ThM: *OBA S.W. Houston/Pearland*. Daniel just completed his ThM. at DTS Houston and is also a teacher at Paratus Classical Academy in Houston, TX.
- Dr. Chad Rankin, DMin: *OBA S. Houston*. Dr. Rankin serves as Assistant Pastor of Bible Way Fellowship Baptist Church in Houston. He was instrumental in bringing on Bible Way as an OBA Host church.
- Allan Ingraham, ThM.: *OBA E. Houston*. Allen serves as the assistant to the Pastor at Bible Way Fellowship Baptist Church.
- Sherrie Brown, Th.M.: *OBA W. Houston/Katy*. Sherrie serves as Director of Faith Children's Center at Houston's First Baptist Church.

Administrators:

- Pam Walker: *OBA W. Houston/Katy and N.W./Cypress*. Pam uses the administrative skills she employs in her job as an office coordinator to keep things running smoothly. She is a major blessing to OBA. 

Staff Spotlight:

**Pastor Juan Ayala, B.A., ThM.
Instructor**

OBA is blessed beyond measure to have Pastor Juan Ayala as an instructor.

Pastor Juan Ayala serves as senior pastor of Misericordia Baptist Church, in Houston, Texas. He has pastored there since 2010. Juan also served as senior pastor for Esperanza Baptist Church, Humble, Texas from 2001-2010. Juan received his Bachelors of Science from The College of Biblical Studies in Houston, TX in 2009. He received his Master of Theology from Dallas



OBA's prayer is that our students not only learn more about the Bible, but are changed by what they learn.

Theological Seminary in 2014. Juan was ordained as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ by Iglesia Bautista Fuente de Agua Viva in May of 2003.

Juan's relationship with Jesus Christ is best captured in his own words:

"The words and works of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have transformed my life. My life is sustained through Jesus who has reconciled me to God the Father and has called me to the ministry of reconciliation. I have been called to love God, through an on going relationship, but also to serve Him by serving others. *I have been called as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ to bring hope to lost people, to guide and equip those who have believed, and to build future leaders in the local church.*"

We at OBA can attest that these are not just words, but Juan practices what he preaches! He is one of the most humble and dedicated people we have the



Pastor Juan Ayala. Juan is married to Lucia G. Ayala and they have two children, Maribel Alyssa Ayala and Monica Melissa Ayala.

privilege of knowing. Juan is a blessing to the body of Christ and we look forward to working with him for years to come. 

Help us continue offering excellent training by instructors like Pastor Ayala!

- » To donate online, visit: <http://www.the-oba.org> and select the "Donate" Button.
- » Or, mail a check to:
The Opened Bible Academy
8524 Highway 6 North Box #436
Houston, TX 77095.

Opened Bible Academy is a 501(c)(3) organization and all gifts are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Christian Education News: Bored with the Bible?

In past newsletters we've shared that, even though 88% of American homes have a least one Bible, only 37% read the Bible more than once a week. There are many excuses people give for not reading their Bible: it's too complex, it takes too much time, it's too outdated... etc.

A recent article on ChurchLeaders.com asked the question "Why Are So Many Christians Bored With the Bible?" and made the conclusion that "many Christians love the idea of the Bible, but not really the Bible itself."³

Does this sound like you? If so, be reminded of the Psalmist who prayed and asked God for more delight in His word:

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (Ps 119:18)

Also realize that, *one reason you may be bored is that you've forgotten what the Bible is.* We must be reminded that "no voice anywhere anytime can reach as deep or lift as high or carry as far as the voice of God that we hear in the Bible."⁴

At OBA, we treasure God's Word and hope to pass along this same passion to our students! 

To read the full article, click [here](#).

³Segal, Marshall. Churchleaders.com: "Why Are So Many Christians Bored With the Bible?" <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/281901-many-christians-bored-bible-desiring-god-marshall-segal.html>

⁴Quoted from John Piper (same article)

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WITH OBA!**



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