

ISSUE 60 FALL 2025

Rio Grande

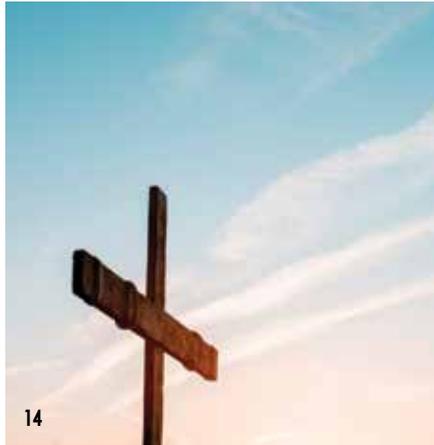
MAGAZINE



RIO GRANDE
MASTER'S DEGREE
A REALITY

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FALL 2025



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TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS PUBLICATION:

Rio Grande Bible Ministries or Rio Grande = organizational name
Seminario Biblico Rio Grande or SBRG = Bible College
MLS = Missionary Language School (1955-2017)
ICS = InterCultural Studies (2017-)
Year = Graduated or last attended

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LARRY WINDLE
President
BOB KRACHT
Managing Editor
KAY KRONBERG
Copy Editor
DONNA ANTONIUK
Campus News
BILLY JACKSON
Photographer
CHRISTY BROKENS
Graphic Designer

PURPOSE To make God's people aware of the needs of the Hispanic World and the role that Rio Grande Bible Institute serves to provide godly Christian leadership.

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RIO GRANDE BIBLE INSTITUTE
RGBI Canada
103-2005 St. Mary's Rd.
Winnipeg, MB R2N 4P1
www.riogrande.edu

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on the cover Academic dean, Dr. Milton Morocho congratulates Carlos Torrez, who is the first to receive his master's degree at Rio Grande. Two others also received their master's at the May graduation, although they could not be present.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

MAKING BETTER BEST

“Good, Better, Best. Never let it rest ‘till the good is better and the better best!”

One of my cherished Bible college professors, Dr. Alban Douglas, repeated this favorite adage many times during my four years under his tutelage.

I graduated from Bible college 39 years ago with a degree in theology and biblical languages. Soon after, I served a decade as a senior pastor. I had learned sound principles of exegesis and Bible study, yet quickly discovered my ministry required far more than my classroom training had covered.

My favorite NFL coach, Tom Landry, once said, “A coach is someone who tells you what you don’t want to hear, who has you see what you don’t want to see, so you can be who you have always thought you could be.”ⁱ

I realized I needed a coach. I knew how to study and use my modest library, but my skills were unrefined. Experience became my teacher. I learned to preach

without lulling my listeners to sleep, counsel effectively, visit meaningfully, train Sunday School teachers, coordinate church events, and work with elders and deacons. I got involved in the community, served on county boards, and picked up unexpected skills—studying medicine, accounting, and even firefighting. I worked at a grain elevator, repaired farm equipment, and managed accounts for a trucking company. In secular matters, I learned from seasoned professionals; in ministry, I was largely self-taught.

After ten years in the pastorate, God called us into missions. One day, our mission president, Carl McMindes, stopped me in the hall and said, “*Set the goal in your life to never stop studying and never stop learning. And make sure that some of it is taught by trained experts!*”

At the time, I was pridefully convinced I could teach myself anything. But his words—“*by trained experts*”—stuck with me. I began taking courses from such experts, and to my surprise, I discovered some of my long-held practices were neither the most efficient nor the most effective. Expert instruction sharpened my

skills and introduced me to better disciplines. My foundational training was vital, and my years of study and practice were invaluable, but the insights of trained specialists elevated my ministry to a new level.

Graduates of Rio Grande are well-grounded in doctrine, Bible study, and ministry skills, yet, many of them express a desire for deeper study, broader ministry training, and fresh challenges to stretch their abilities.

In response, we have launched our first post-graduate program—a Master’s-level degree. I invite you to turn the pages of this issue to meet some of our first graduates and the professors who have helped guide them toward “better” and ultimately toward “best.”



Lawrence B. Windle



TRAINING FOR TRANSFORMATION

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MASTER OF
ARTS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES
PROGRAM AT RIO GRANDE BIBLE COLLEGE**

by Javier Rodríguez

Rio Grande Bible College, with a strong legacy of academic excellence and a deep commitment to biblical-theological formation, has taken a significant step forward by launching a graduate-level program: the **Master of Arts in Biblical Studies**. This initiative represents a substantial contribution to the advancement of theological education in Latin America and beyond, responding to the urgent need for deep and contextualized biblical training.

This program is grounded in a rigorous exegetical-biblical approach, offering a systematic journey through the entire Bible. The curriculum is designed to facilitate focused, thematic study sections, encouraging responsible, detailed engagement with the sacred text. The degree can be completed in approximately one and a half years, with flexible timelines available to accommodate the diverse realities of the students.

A defining feature of this master's program is its contextual orientation. In a world marked by complex social, ethical, and spiritual challenges, the need for biblically grounded leaders who can provide relevant answers is more pressing than ever. Rio Grande's students—pastors, missionaries, educators, and committed lay leaders—have accepted the call to do theology seriously, seeking transformative answers from Scripture for both local and global contexts.

The faculty is composed of professors holding master's and doctoral degrees from various countries. In addition to their academic credentials, they bring extensive ministry experience, enabling them to integrate theory and practice effectively. Their teaching methodology is shaped by an orthopraxis approach that promotes critical thinking, spiritual formation, and social engagement.

Courses are taught in Spanish and delivered through an online format,

RIO GRANDE IS COMMITTED NOT ONLY TO DELIVERING HIGH-LEVEL THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE, BUT ALSO TO FORMING DISCIPLES.

allowing participation from students across the globe. This delivery model has been especially valuable for students in regions where religious restrictions make in-person theological education difficult. Thanks to technological tools, the college is able to provide high-quality instruction across different time zones and cultural settings.

Moreover, all students are actively involved in a church or ministry context, ensuring that their academic learning has immediate practical application. This constant interaction between academic study and ministry work fosters a holistic formation, aimed at intellectual growth as well as spiritual and communal transformation.

Through the Master of Arts in Biblical Studies, Rio Grande is committed not only to delivering high-level theological knowledge, but also to forming disciples

devoted to God's Kingdom. Each course is designed as a space for encounter with the Bible, theological deepening, and renewed commitment to ministry.

In times of global uncertainty, we offer a hopeful alternative: serious biblical study as a foundation for living a coherent, critical, and compassionate life of faith. This master's program seeks to empower Christian leaders who can interpret their context with wisdom and love, and who are equipped to carry out transformative ministry in their communities.

As an educational institution, Rio Grande reaffirms its commitment to fulfilling its institutional mission and strengthening the vision that defines it: the formation of Christ-centered leaders with a comprehensive biblical worldview, capable of making a meaningful impact on the global church.



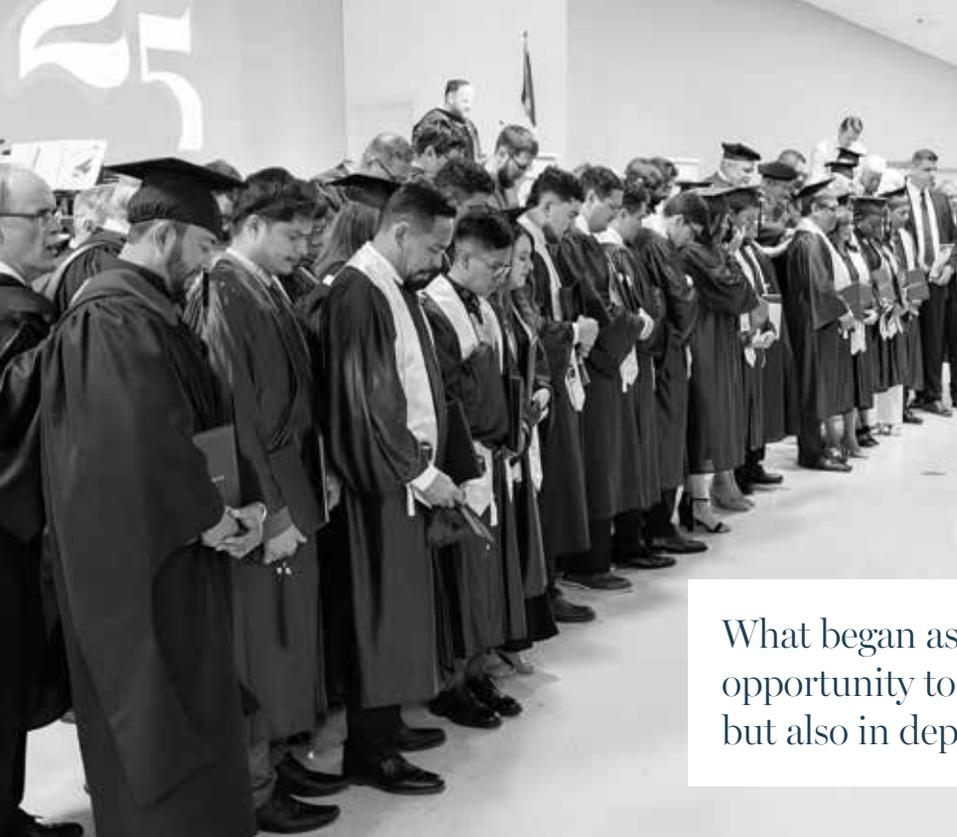
AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW

A DESIRE FULFILLED IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Carlos Torrez

God, in His sovereignty,
had already prepared
the place where I would
continue my training.





What began as a challenge became an opportunity to grow, not only academically, but also in dependence on Him.

After graduating in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in Theological Studies, I always had the desire to continue my education. The next step was a master's degree. However, there were situations in my life that delayed that beginning: financial difficulties and universities that offered scholarships but did not align with my theological principles.

In 2020, I was diagnosed with cancer. Between treatments and medical expenses, continuing my studies was impossible. Even so, God, in His sovereignty, had already prepared the place where I would continue my training. That place was precisely Rio Grande Bible Seminary, the same place where I had begun my preparation and where I was now able to complete my master's degree.

MY EXPERIENCE AS AN ONLINE STUDENT

I have always preferred to study in person, so the online format was a challenge from the beginning. However, God helped me adapt. He gave me discipline to organize my time, motivation to keep learning even at a distance, and the grace to apply what I was learning immediately in my service at Las Palmas Baptist Church and in ministry. What began as a challenge became an opportunity to grow, not only academically, but also in dependence on Him.

In addition, God gave me the opportunity to meet brothers in Christ who are now my friends. We shared many experiences during our time as students; together we encouraged one another when academic, ministry, and family responsibilities were so heavy that we thought we would not make it. It was a beautiful experience to see how God strengthened us through

our classmates, using their words, prayers, and even simple messages of encouragement to remind us that we were not alone on the journey.

In the midst of long nights of study, assignments, and ministry commitments, we learned to laugh together, to pray for one another, and to support each other. Today I can say that this stage not only gave me a degree, but also sincere friendships and memories that I will treasure for the rest of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the entire academic and technical team of Rio Grande Bible Seminary for making this master's degree possible. I also deeply thank my wife and my family, who were always there to give me words of encouragement. And, in a very special way, I want to thank my church, Las Palmas Baptist Church in Weslaco, Texas, whose support was essential for me to successfully complete this academic stage.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... to Him be glory” (Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV).

GOD AGAIN AGAIN!

Ramfis Munoz, Master's Graduate

ANSWERED

I remember when I asked the Lord for the opportunity to study theology in a quality Bible Seminary

—and He sent me to Rio Grande Bible College ten years ago. That experience transformed me and helped me to develop a Christ-centered worldview of my Christian and ministerial life. After graduation, I returned to Nicaragua in June of 2015 and I had the blessing of sharing all that I learned as a pastor, missionary, Bible teacher and in other spiritual roles.

It has been a decade now since I finished my studies and received a Bachelor's Degree in Biblical Studies (Pastoral Emphasis). Since then, one of my main desires has been to continue growing in my biblical preparation, but many circumstances did not allow me to do so. Then, I remember seeing an advertisement on Rio Grande's social networks related to a new academic degree--a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies. I felt encouraged to continue my Bible studies at a postgraduate level at Rio Grande again, therefore, I asked God for an opportunity to enroll in the Master's program; and again, He answered! Recently, with great joy, on May 13th, 2025, I graduated with honors and am part of the first

generation of Master of Arts in Biblical Studies class at Rio Grande Bible Seminary.

The scholarship program has been one of the keys in this process, and I would like to thank all the people who have supported me in some way, especially those who sponsor the scholarship fund and who have been part of my prayer team.

There is no doubt that this latest master's experience also has had a great impact on my ministry, because I am continually teaching people in my local church and other churches and ministries the topics, principles, and reading material learned in classes. Studying for my masters has helped me to improve in the way I study the Bible, preach, teach and counsel. I can see this, because the people I serve have been impacted and challenged to live a life more according to Christ and the Scriptures. It is a joy for me when I hear testimonies regarding these changes in their lives.

Studying for my masters has helped me to improve in the way I study the Bible, preach, teach and counsel.

For that reason, one of my goals is to focus on formalizing a Bible ministry that will allow me to lead believers to a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ and equip them with the tools to achieve that experience. But I am convinced that this cannot be accomplished alone. I have learned during the Master's program, that I require total dependence on God and people praying for me, I must be accountable for what I am doing ministerially, minister by the power of the Holy Spirit, and focus on serious and competent study of the Scriptures.

In conclusion, God is going to answer our prayers according to His purpose. Therefore, if you are reading this, and you currently are a student at Seminario Biblico Rio Grande, I encourage you to persevere. If you are thinking about becoming a part of the student body at Rio Grande, I invite you to do so. It will be an experience that will be worth all your effort, and your life will never be the same!

NEXT STEPS IN TRAINING GODLY LEADERS

Elijah Windle

May of 2025 marked a historic graduation. For the first time in Rio Grande's nearly 80 years of training godly men and women for ministry, we awarded our first Master's degrees to three students. We are rejoicing in God's faithfulness in helping both our students and staff accomplish this new milestone for Rio Grande. These students have graduated as our most academically prepared leaders for the growing needs of the Latin American church. Churches continue to grow and the Latin American population is increasingly well educated. These changes highlight the need for godly, biblical, and practical higher education for the Spanish speaking church at a cost they can afford. Rio Grande's Master of Arts in Biblical Studies program is one of the few biblically faithful master's degrees that exist for pastors, missionaries, and theologians in Spanish. This program builds the biblical and theological foundation that many master's degrees lack, at a deeper level of study, academic rigor, and practical ministry than our bachelor's program.

**RIO GRANDE'S
MASTER OF ARTS
IN BIBLICAL
STUDIES PROGRAM
IS ONE OF THE
FEW BIBLICALLY
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EXIST FOR PASTORS,
MISSIONARIES, AND
THEOLOGIAN IN
SPANISH.**



AS RIO GRANDE
OBEDIENTLY
FOLLOWS GOD
INTO THESE NEXT
PROGRAMS, WE
ASK YOU TO PRAY
WITH US.

Our master's graduates studied 36 credit hours of classes dedicated to the expository and in-depth study of each book of the Bible and each major division of theology at a deeper level than their undergraduate counterparts have been able to in the past. These graduates and their fellow master's students represent a growing number of leaders from all over Latin America who have a bachelor's degree and seek a deeper knowledge of Scripture and Theology for part or full-time ministry in a local church or missions. This online program is now serving students across the globe.

Arts degree is the first step in that vision that led us towards a comprehensive Master of Divinity degree. This first degree establishes the biblical and theological foundation for ministry.

The next degree we are planning to offer will be a Master's in Applied Ministry that will thoroughly train pastors, missionaries, and Christian educators in the practical ministry tools that enable them to serve faithfully and competently in any ministry that God calls them to. This degree will build on the first, adding classes in ministry, leadership, administration, counseling, expository preaching, and others. This degree will

God has made this possible through a combination of provisions. Those provisions include our newly expanded library, digital library resources and study tools, more professors with doctoral degrees, and the infrastructure for meeting the ministerial and academic needs of online students. God then brought and sustained students through the program. Now that our first graduates are finishing their degrees, the big question we now ask at this milestone is, "What is next?"

I would like to walk you through some of the next steps that God has laid on our hearts. We are charting a course forward that will help provide the Latin American church with leaders, theologians, authors, and teachers who can sustain the next generation of theological education. The Master of

Divinity will culminate in an intensive internship that will allow students to hone their craft of ministry under the careful guidance of faithful and experienced ministers in their field. Our vision for this degree is graduates who shepherd the flock of God with excellence and love.

Our third master's degree will be a Master's of Divinity that follows and builds on the first two. This final step in our Master of Divinity track will prepare the next generation of theologians and scholars. Building on the foundational and practical content of the first steps, this degree would add deeper study of Biblical Languages and theological education. Our vision for this degree is graduates who train the next generation of leaders and theologians for the Latin American church through Bible schools, books, radio, television, and other media that does not yet exist.

We believe that God's vision for the Latin American church is believers and churches that know Him well, disciple others, train leaders, and bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. With God's favor and continued guidance and provision, these next two master's degrees will help meet the growing needs of the Spanish speaking church through providing thoroughly trained and competent students of the Bible and articulate theologians who will be able to faithfully train others for ministry.

As Rio Grande obediently follows God into these next programs, we ask you to pray with us. God has uniquely gifted and placed Rio Grande in the position of helping meet the growing academic needs of the Spanish speaking church. We are excited to see where God takes us next. Praise the Lord for what he has done and congratulations to Rio Grande's first master's graduates!

APRIL 2025 - JULY 2025

HONOR & MEMORIAL GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

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EDNA FRIESEN
William & Isabel Acheson
Judy Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Orlin Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Axvig
Elmer & Anne Brandt
Ronald & June Bryan
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Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Axvig
Mr. & Mrs. Glen Guhde
Mr. & Mrs. Donald John
Helen Robinson

RIO GRANDE BIBLE MINISTRIES
CAMPUS NEWS

The following people joined our staff recently:



◀ **JOSÉ ALMERA (BC '14)** helps in the Maintenance Department, while his wife, Marlet, teaches at Vanguard Academy in a nearby town.



◀ **JIM (MLS '75) and JEANNE BERRYHILL (MLS '75)** are new in the Spiritual Advisor Office. Previously they served many years as missionaries in Venezuela and Colombia.

▶ **JONATHAN BLYCKER** has come on board as Music Director, and his wife, **BLAIR**, helps in our Campus Mail Room while taking Spanish classes in our Inter-Cultural Studies program.



▶ **ROBERTO DE LA ROSA** serves in the Welcome Center in the mornings, greeting campus visitors and answering phone calls to the switchboard, and in the Maintenance Department in the afternoons.



◀ **FRANZ FAIETA** is on the faculty of the Bible College, and his wife, **CLAUDIA**, is Assistant Registrar.



◀ **J.T. (ICS '23) and HEATHER GREER (ICS '23)** acquire, organize, and distribute food donations for our Campus Food Pantry.

▶ **PATRICIA HOEKSEMA** helps in both the Campus Daycare and the Finance Department, after many years serving in Guatemala.



▶ **CHRISTY HOFER (ICS '25)** is the new Video Department Assistant. Previously she served in a similar ministry in Spain.



◀ **TEMO (BC '24) and MELEA RAMOS (ICS '24)** have joined Rio Grande Global. They recently welcomed their firstborn son.



◀ **JAVIER RODRIGUEZ (BC '24)** joined us to serve in the Online Department, and his wife, **JENN (BC '24)**, works in the Finance Department.

ROLLED

away

Larry Windle, President



We went to Sunday School! The church bus picked us up at our house and took us to the Little Brown Church. We all went down into the basement and sat in chairs facing the front. It was all so new—we had never heard those songs before, or those Bible verses, or the missionary stories.

One Sunday morning, the lady leading the Sunday School opening said that we sometimes do things that are wrong, and the Bible calls it sin. She explained that the wages of sin is death. Then she told us something amazing: if we confess our sins to Jesus, **He is faithful and just to forgive our sins!**

Forgive, she explained, means to roll them all up and throw them away.

She rotated her hands over each other and said, “Rolled,” then extended them out and said, “Away!”

One of the kids held up a big construction paper placard with words and little stick figures drawn on it. Our teacher taught us the song from the paper, complete with the rolling and throwing gestures:

Rolled away!
Rolled away!
Rolled away!
Every burden of my heart
rolled away.
Rolled away, rolled away,
rolled away,
Every burden of my heart
rolled away.
Every sin had to go,
'Neath the crimson flow,
HALLELUJAH!
Rolled away, rolled away,
rolled away,
Every burden of my heart
rolled away.

The Commission of Forgiveness

This was the message Jesus sent His disciples into the world to proclaim: “...that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name among all nations.”ⁱ

The Hebrew word *nāśā'* expresses guilt being taken away, atoned for, or borne—resulting in divine pardon. What a thrill to receive His forgiveness and salvation! But perhaps an equally amazing reality is that He then commissions the forgiven to **declare the message of forgiveness** to a world that has sinned and stands condemned.

Living Like Ambassadors

Ambassadors of a king or country understand the role they carry and carefully adjust their lives, even their behavior and attire, to match the great commission they have been given.

Oh, the release of having your sins rolled away! And the parallel joy of following Jesus' example—rolling away the sins of others against us. Not carrying guilt, and releasing resentment, are liberating parallels.

Jesus' Teaching on Forgiveness

In Matthew 18, Jesus instructed His followers on how to apply God's value of forgiveness to others. He told the parable of a king settling accounts with his servants. One servant owed a massive debt he couldn't repay. The king forgave the debt, but that servant then refused to forgive a much smaller debt owed to him. When the king heard of this, he was angered and punished the unforgiving servant.

“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” — Matthew 18:35

Unlimited Forgiveness

Christ taught that forgiveness is not optional—it is the duty of His followers. **No limit** can be set to its extent, and it must be granted without reserve.

He told Peter to forgive not merely **seven times, but seventy times seven** (Mt. 18:21), showing that forgiveness has no ceiling. This forgiving spirit is woven into the Lord's Prayer: “...as we also have forgiven our debtors.” — Matthew 6:12

God's forgiveness of our sins is directly linked to our forgiveness of others (Mk. 11:25; Mt. 6:14). An unforgiving heart is essentially a sign of unrepentance.

The Cross: The Ultimate Example

Perhaps the greatest demonstration of forgiveness came on the cross. As Jesus was being crucified, He prayed: *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* — Luke 23:34

Even in agony, He extended mercy to those who condemned Him.

Conclusion

The Christian life is both receiving forgiveness and extending it. The sins we have committed are rolled away by the crimson flow of Christ's blood. And the sins committed against us can be rolled away as we forgive from the heart.

Forgiveness frees both the giver and the receiver—and it reflects the heart of Christ to the world.



4300 S Business Highway 281
Edinburg, TX 78539-9650

In Canada:
103-2005 St. Mary's Rd
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2N 4P1

www.riogrande.edu



"II TIMOTHY 2: 15
EXHORTS US TO "BE
DILIGENT TO PRESENT
YOURSELF APPROVED
TO GOD AS A WORKER
WHO DOES NOT NEED
TO BE ASHAMED,
ACCURATELY HANDLING
THE WORD OF TRUTH."

What a great privilege to continue the training of our students after their undergraduate degree to further the expansion of the gospel. We were able to graduate our first three graduates from the online Master of Arts degree in May. God has allowed us to progress in this area, and we pray that we can continue expanding and seeing many more students graduate from our master's program."

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL ROBERT ALLEN, 956-380-8125