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# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

## FOOTNOTES: TEST THIS STUDY WITH SCRIPTURE

I once read somewhere that “Jesus loves footnotes, and so should you.”<sup>1</sup> It made me laugh, but it also rang true. In many ways, Jesus would do or say something, but by referencing the Law or the Prophets He would essentially be saying, as LeVar Burton famously used to say at the end of “Reading Rainbow,” “don’t take my word for it.”

If Jesus insisted to the Jews that they should search the Scriptures for the claims of Christ, and if the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to check Paul’s message, then I ask you as well to do your own homework and check the Scriptures for yourself. I don’t want this to be my message or my theology. I want to read, study, meditate, and apply the Scriptures to my life and then share that with others. For this reason, I did my best in including the various Scriptures, and other resources, which helped me understand my own faith and show me who Jesus is.

## PRACTICAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

As often as I could, I added in a small section with tools and resources. As a Christian, we know we have the three key things for knowing God: our own brains, our bibles, and the Holy Spirit. But as the body of Christ, we add a fourth key resource that is not only helpful, but is even instructed for use by God. This is the resource of each other.

As a body, we are here to sharpen each other, guide each other, correct each other, and hold each other accountable. This isn’t just in areas of sin or weakness, but also in our study of the Word. And yet it is not just in the actual *action* of studying, but we should be holding each other accountable to *what we are finding*.

For this reason, we have scores and scores of books, resources, sermons, blogs, friends, pastors, churches, creeds, etc. that can be of incredible use for us. Don’t be prideful. Be humble. Seek out wisdom, first and foremost from the Holy Spirit and the Word, but also from the body of Christ.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

I also wanted to have a practical place at the end of each chapter that gives a definition of terms used in each chapter. I wanted to have them both in each pertinent chapter and all in one spot at the end, because as a student, I like seeing things grouped together in their relative subject. Personally, it helps me grasp them more.

Throughout the study, I have marked each special term with a little clover (♣). When you see this clover, though the definition will be there in that section, you can know that it will be included in the glossary at the end of the chapter and the study itself.

## BIBLE TRANSLATION

I have chosen to use, unless noted, the English Standard Version of the bible. It is an incredibly readable yet accurate translation of the Old and New Testament. Not as difficult to read as the NASB or NKJV, but more accurate in its word for word translation than the NIV. If you are unfamiliar with it, I highly encourage you to pick up a copy and use it as part of your study.

Additionally, many translations differ on which words they capitalize. When quoting from particular translations, I have left the capitalization the way the particular bible translates it. When writing my own thoughts, I have chosen to capitalize many particular words, such as He, Us, They, Trinity, Word, Scripture, and Name when speaking of God, as well as a few other important words that I chose to have stand out due to their particular importance or at times “official” nature (such as Covenant of Redemption).

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<sup>1</sup> I figured just by default this quote deserves a footnote, and the first one, no less! I believe this quote came from either Pastor Matt Chandler or Pastor Tim Chaddick.

# I. INTRODUCTION TO DOCTRINE

## DEFINING DOCTRINE AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

You are a theologian.

Say that to yourself real quick. “I am a theologian.” Is that a strange concept to you? Whether you have thought of yourself as one or not, the fact of the matter is that you are one. As a matter of fact, everyone is. After all, the basic definition of theology is “the study of God,” so a theologian is someone who has studied God. Now, I didn’t say how *good* of a theologian you are, but even the atheist is a theologian, as his “study of God” has come to the conclusion that “there is no god.” That is a theological statement, regardless of whether it is right or wrong.

We live in a day and age of Christianity where there is a lot of fluff, a lot of feel-good ideas, concepts, and writings that appeal to our emotions. Sadly, many believe “theology” or “doctrine” to be something divisive or something of “old fashioned religion,” and that the popular phrase that “Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship” throws doctrine and theology in the category of religion, making a relationship with Christ the only thing of importance. A general view is that as long as the person believes in Jesus, prays, and reads their bible (or in many cases, just Christian literature), then we are good to go. Though this may be enough for to have a basic faith, this is by far a false view of being a passionate disciple of Christ. And, ironically enough, that view *is* in itself a theology, so inasmuch as they would purport that theology is for the religious, having a theology is inescapable, even for the most “free spirited.”

So now that we have at least seen that we all have at least *some* type of theological slant, now the task is on us to find out if we have the *right* theology. Because here’s the thing, knowing right doctrine and theology will point you towards a *healthier, richer, balanced, passionate* relationship with Jesus Christ. For those that are married or have children, you know that the more that you *know* the person you love, the more you love them. This is true with God. The more we know Him – His Word, His ways, His faithfulness, His truth, His character, His methods, His plan, His heart, His “history”, and His grace – the more we fall in love with this wonderful, beautiful God.

### Right Doctrine = Right Relationship = Right Living

I believe that there is a divine order of right living. Notice I don’t say “moral” living, as Christianity and faith in Jesus go far beyond the “religion” of morality. Yes, morality may be a valid byproduct or evidence of our faith, but it is not the end all, be all. Our right living *must* be a product of a right relationship with Christ, not a willingness or desire to “be good.” Even further, the only way to *have* a right relationship with Christ is by *intimately knowing who He is*. This comes by knowing the Word, will, and ways of God. When we know good theology, theology that teaches us that God exists, is personal, can be known, loves us, saves us, and changes us, this theology and doctrine impassions us to pursue Him with all that we have as a lover of God.

### There can be no spiritual health without doctrinal knowledge.

– J.I. Packer<sup>2</sup>

Before moving on, let’s more or less “officially” define both doctrine and theology. The words, admittedly, are very close in relationship, and are often used very interchangeably, so don’t get too hung up on it. But for the sake of clarity, let’s look at these two words.

**Theology:** In general, as stated before, theology is the study of God. It is the formulation of thoughts and beliefs that one has that is related to the topic of “God.” It is basically your beliefs about God.

**Doctrine:** Again, this is very close to the definition of theology, but what doctrine simply means is “teaching.” To understand it simply, the various doctrines you hold on particular topics, collectively, will form your theology, like bricks forming a building.

So the question for us all is this: what is our theology, where do we get it from, and what doctrines are we living by and teaching others?

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<sup>2</sup> Knowing God, pg. 22



## WHERE WE ASCERTAIN THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINE



**Epistemology: the Study of Knowledge:** (“episteme” = “knowledge”): How do we get knowledge and understanding? By what mediums does God use, and how, in order to teach us about Himself and the world that He has created? A right understanding of how God has chosen to reveal Himself to us is crucial for a healthy, vibrant, and God-honoring life of discipleship.

*Revelation* is a word used to describe something that has been revealed. Thomas Oden says that “the word *revelation* unites the two biblical ideas of an unveiling (*apokalypsis*, disclosure, appearing, coming) of God and a making known (*phanerōsis*, exhibition, manifestation, expression) of divine mysteries previously concealed.”<sup>3</sup> In our faith, God has revealed Himself through various ways.

**General Revelation:** General Revelation is the act of God revealing Himself to all people throughout history. This is done through nature and creation,<sup>4</sup> through human experience,<sup>5</sup> and our own conscience.<sup>6</sup> All of these give us *some* indication of the fact that God exists (e.g., wonder and intricacy of nature), what some of His attributes are (e.g., experiencing love and other emotions), and what His standard of living is (e.g., our conscience).

**Special Revelation:** Though general revelation gives people the general knowledge of certain aspects of God and thusly makes them responsible to further seek out who this God is, on its own it does not do much for our faith. This is why we need “special revelation.” This is found in the specific revealing of particular truths and realities. We see this happen through the specifics of His Word,<sup>7</sup> and most definitively through Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup> These two special revelations are the *only* instances of God’s perfectly revealed will.



## VARIOUS STUDIES WE WILL BE LOOKING AT



Some of the phrases you will be hearing over the course of this class will be important for your understanding of how the Word of God works together in harmony. To understand them to the best of our ability and in taking in the whole counsel of the Word, there are a few approaches to studying doctrine and theology. Let’s look at a few of these.

**Hermeneutics:** This is the theological viewpoint of interpretation. Determining this determines how you study and view the bible. For instance, whether you view the Word as either perfect or imperfect determines how you read it. Also, how you approach certain texts to be either literal or symbolic also changes how you study. Most evangelicals<sup>9</sup> follow what is called a *historical grammatical* method. This method believes that there is a “literal” and historical purpose and interpretation for each book of the bible. It approaches the Word by asking “what did the author of this book intend to communicate to their listener?” With that, it takes into consideration grammatical understanding of symbolism, idioms, and other cultural and linguistic elements.

**Exegesis:** Once you understand your hermeneutics, you can now apply it by doing what is called “exegesis.” This is the process of seeking to determine the correct meaning out of a particular passage of the Scripture. It is the method and practice by which you study to determine what the bible is really saying, in our case, by employing the historical grammatical hermeneutic. So, hermeneutics is the “how to” understand the Word, and exegesis is the action of actually doing the “how to.”

Once you begin to employ these, you start formulating your “theology,” or your “study of God.” There are various subdivisions of theology.

**Biblical Theology:** This is the most general, it is the study of Scriptural revelation based on the historical framework represented in the bible.

**Philosophical Theology:** This uses various tools of God’s general revelation (nature, reason, etc.) to study various topics. You use these tools to help you understand biblical theology.

<sup>3</sup> Systematic Theology: Volume 1, the Living God by Thomas Oden, page 17. He also cross references Ephesians 3.3, Job 12.22 and Daniel 2.22-29

<sup>4</sup> Romans 1.18-23 // Psalm 8.1-9, 19.1-6, 50.1-6, 97.1-6

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 1.27 // John 13.35 // Luke 11.13

<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 4.2 // Hebrews 9.6-14, 10.22

<sup>7</sup> Romans 16.25-27 // 2 Timothy 3.16

<sup>8</sup> John 3.16 // Hebrews 9.23-26 // Romans 3.21, 22 // Ephesians 3.10-12

<sup>9</sup> To roughly and loosely define an “evangelical” Christian, the basis of it is a Christian who believes in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the main, fundamental teachings of the bible. It usually denotes theologically conservative Christians who believe in things such as the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture, the Trinity, the fact that Jesus is Lord, and salvation by grace through faith alone (as opposed to works-based salvation).

We will use these methods when we approach particular topics and issues in the Word. These specific focused studies we affectionately call the “ologies.”

The suffix “-ology” comes from “logos,” the Latin word for “word.” We translate it as “study.” Therefore, “bio-“, meaning “life,” and “-ology,” meaning “study,” means “the study of life,” or “biology.”

**Bibliology: The Study of the Bible:** (“Bible” = “Bible”):

**Theology: The Study of God:** (“Theo” = “God”): Theology is specifically studying God. Who He is, what He does, His patterns, ways, and interactions. It is the most general term we use for studying His Word.

**Anthropology: The Study of Man:** (“anthropos” = “human”): Origin, physical make up, behaviors, and such.

**Hamartiology: The Study of Sin:** (“hamartia” = “sin” or “missing the mark”): How it affects us, where it comes from, the residual effects of it, how it is fixed, etc.

**Christology: The Study of Jesus Christ:**(“Christos” = “Christ”): Who He is, what He accomplished, how He affects our life, His relationship within the Trinity, His deity, His humanity.

**Pneumatology: The Study of the Holy Spirit:** (“pneuma” = “breath”): “Breath” is a metaphor for a non-material being (ghost or spirit) or influence. It is the study of where the Holy Spirit came from, what His role is in our life, His relationship within the Trinity, etc.

**Soteriology: The Study of Salvation:** (“soterion” = “salvation”): How do we receive salvation, who can be saved, what is the process, how is it carried out?

**Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church:**(“ekklesia” = “assembly”): What is the church, who leads the church, who is part of the church, what is the church’s role, how does it function and carry out God’s will?

**Eschatology: The Study of the Last Things (End Times):** (“eschatos” = “last”): What will happen at the end of days, what is the order of the last days (rapture, second coming of Christ, etc.)?

The way I see it in an overly simplified way, as people we typically have three varying views of theology. We can have what I call a “make believe theology,” where we just have vague ideas of who we think God is, how He works, and what He wants us to do. We make a lot of our decisions based on impressions, feelings, open doors, and waiting for signs.



The second one I call “buffet theology.” This is where we just pick and choose the various theologies we like and disagree with ones that don’t sit well with us. These decisions aren’t based, however, on the biblical truth of the theologies we are discarding or liking, but just their appeal. This is, more or less, “make believe theology” taking on some type of form. Or maybe better said, like a buffet, they are compartmentalized and kept separate from the rest, and they have non-existent, make believe connections to the other theologies.

The third theology is called “systematic theology.” Once we have a decent grasp on our biblical theology from our “buffet,” especially the many major subdivision “ologies,” we see how they fit together, like a jigsaw puzzle. They complement each other, they illuminate each other, and they don’t contradict each other. We realize that everything we believe is intimately tied to other theologies; they are not isolated. For this reason, it is of paramount importance that we *truly know* what we believe and *why* we believe it.



**Systematic Theology:** The study that answers the question “what does the whole bible say about this particular topic or issue.” It shows how various Scriptures throughout the bible work in harmony together to form a well rounded, connected, agreeing view of a particular topic. It also then connects them to other “ologies,” forming a completed jigsaw puzzle. This isn’t to say that every single last question in the bible is answered, this simply can’t be, as God cannot be *completely* known in totality. But we do understand, with confidence, how God has chosen to reveal Himself and work and act among our world.

**Practical Theology:** An important byproduct of knowing our various “ologies” is the result of practical theology. This is when we are studying and we examine how to best apply truths to the life of the church and the world around us (missions, preaching, evangelism, counseling, etc.). No “ology” is very useful unless it changes us.

The ironic thing of these “ologies,” in particular biblical, systematic, and practical theology, is that they can’t really exist without each other. When titling this work, I was hard pressed to decide what to name it. I wanted it to be biblical, of course, but I realized I was showing how the various “ologies” intertwine, so it became a bit of a systematic theology class. But I didn’t want it to just be knowledge, and wanted it to be super practical.

In the end, a good systematic theology must be biblical and practical. Good practical theology will be both systematic and biblical, and good biblical theology will always be systematic and practical. The difference is really just looking at good ol’ fashioned theology from a different angle.

### **The goal of theology is to worship God.**

—Philip Ryken

**Apologetics:** Lastly, a proper understanding of all of these will give us confidence in our life and we will be able to recognize, oppose, and defend against false teachings and philosophies. Apologetics is the studying of theology in order to defend truth against criticism and distortion and giving evidence to its credibility.

When all is said and done, good theology will change us from the inside out and in every area of our life. As I stated in the beginning, “Right Doctrine = Right Relationship = Right Living.” Even just since the beginning of working on this study, I have fallen more in love with my wife, my two boys, and my church. My personal evangelism has grown greatly, and I see my life and the plan of God in this world so much differently, and it causes me to live and think differently. Knowing God changes you. Good theology causes you to worship, because the more you know Him, the more you love Him.

**At the end of the day, Jesus said that “all the Law and Prophets hang on [the] two commands” to love God and love each other.**

**All study of the Word of God should cause us to love God and love people more.  
If it doesn’t, we’re doing something wrong.**

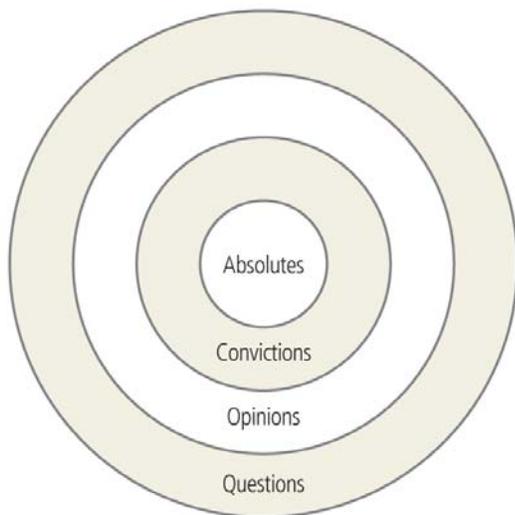
# DIFFERENTIATING ESSENTIAL vs. PERIPHERAL DOCTRINE

The bible certainly covers a *lot* of topical ground. What it says about various topics and subjects, the importance Scripture puts on them, and the ramifications they have in our life and faith greatly dictate what we do with them and how we walk them out. Generally speaking, you will often hear them spoken of as “**closed hand**” issues or doctrines (beliefs we in no way compromise, e.g., the deity of Christ, salvation by grace through faith alone, the existence of only one true God, etc.), as well as “**open hand**” issues or doctrines (beliefs that are not essential for salvation or being a Christian, e.g., church structure, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Christian liberty, etc.).

More specifically, we can break down the various doctrinal findings in the following four categories:

In the chart below, the center circle contains **Absolutes**, doctrines that would be the “closed hand” essentials. These, as we will define in this class, are those that we *will not* compromise in any shape or form, as they are essential to the Christian faith. The second circle, **Convictions**, is for beliefs that we hold strongly to as they facilitate much of the way we live out our life. They are often times essential to the walking out of our faith, but not essential to having faith. We more often than not don’t ever compromise these, however we are constantly open to those convictions changing as God does various works within us. The next circle, **Opinions**, is quite simply that: opinions. These are things that we have typically given thought to, are generally important to us, but in no way do we hold on tight to, often times because the Word doesn’t say much about them and we therefore don’t become dogmatic about them. These opinions will oftentimes greatly change throughout the course of our life, depending on the stage of life we are, our experience, wisdom, and continual revelation of truth in the Word. Lastly, **Questions** are the parts in the Word that are not quite as clear or definitive. These are the least mentioned (or often times unmentioned) issues in the bible that don’t have much dogmatic education, but we know are there for a reason and so we ask questions about their place in our life.

What various issues or doctrines would fall under the following categories?



Absolutes: _____ _____ _____
Convictions: _____ _____ _____
Opinions: _____ _____ _____
Questions: _____ _____ _____

Three main approaches to these doctrines will place us in a particular journey of theology.

What happens when we push any of the three outlying types into the **Absolutes** inner circle?

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What happens when we push any of the **Absolutes** (or even **Convictions**) into any one of the outlying circles?

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What happens when we are mindful of these issues and rightly aim to place them in their proper category?

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## DISCERNING WHICH IS WHICH

Of course, the natural and correct next question would be “how do we know which are “open” and which are “closed”? This, of course, is the source of all the debates over the years. Some groups think that one issue is essential, and the other group thinks that it is not.

In chapter three of his book *Deep Church*, Jim Belcher suggests compartmentalizing our various doctrines into two tiers, an upper tier and a lower tier. The upper tier, of course is those things that would be essential to faith. The lower tier, are those “debatable” or “non-essential” beliefs. One recommendation he makes is that it is made up of the various doctrines covered in the oldest of the ancient creeds, particularly the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creed. These ancient creeds were formulated statements of faith that the general church would construct as a guide for belief and as a safeguard against heresy. These creeds cover the “basics” that focus on the doctrines that, as John Stott is quoted by Belcher saying, form the “unity of the gospel.”

The Apostle’s Creed dates near 180 AD. The ‘legend’ is that it was the apostles who passed it down.

### ***The Apostles’ Creed (from the Book of Common Prayer, 1662)***<sup>10</sup>

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried:  
He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The more thorough Nicene Creed was created in 325 AD and then revamped a little bit in 381 AD. This, I will add, is actually my personal favorite as it reminds me of growing up when I had to memorize these. Although, I will say that at the time I liked the Apostles’ Creed more because it was shorter and easier to memorize, and today I prefer the Athanasian Creed because of its clear inclusion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

### ***The Nicene Creed***

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Lastly, the even *more* thorough Athanasian Creed was created in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. It includes a more thorough description of the doctrine of the Trinity, whereas the previous two creeds, while affirming it, don’t go into as much detail.

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<sup>10</sup> I made minor alterations to this 1662 version. Namely some capitalization and spellings, changing it from old English style to modern English. The word “catholic” was de-capitalized, as it is understood as “universal,” not “Roman Catholic.”

### ***The Athanasian Creed***<sup>11</sup>

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled; without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinites, but one uncreated; and one infinite. So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity; to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the catholic religion; to say, There are three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Essence of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Essence of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of Essence; but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe truly and firmly, he cannot be saved.

Now, these would be the doctrines that we would be able to agree with each other as a basis for salvation and brotherhood. What these agreements do *not* do is tell us how much specific and particular partnership we should have when other doctrines, particularly deep convictions, are disagreed upon. For instance, should a woman marry a man who has no conviction about being faithfully committed to a church body? That isn't an "essential for salvation" issue, but it will dramatically change the way in which they live out their faith.

Having disagreements on these deep convictions shouldn't shirk our commitment to receiving others with genuine love as brothers and sisters in Christ, but they should play a major role as we commit to particular areas of life where we unify ourselves with others in deeper, more intimate ways.

On the same token, we also do know and believe that within a circle of friends and especially within a church, core convictions will be widely disagreed on. So in all this, we must be loving, discerning, and humble before God and toward each other. This is no easy task, to be sure, but knowing our theology and doctrine should help us discern these things.

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<sup>11</sup> I made minor alterations to this, as well, but only in de-capitalizing the phrase "Catholic Faith" and "Catholic Religion" as to not confuse the reader into thinking this as a "Roman Catholic" viewpoint, but that it is instead a catholic, as in universal, view.

# PRACTICAL TOOLS

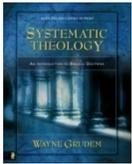
As we go throughout this study, I will always break down the final part of each section with some practical tools. I will share resources, a glossary of terms we learned, and some study questions and word studies.

## ♣ Definition of Terms ♣

Since this whole section was nothing but defining terms, I won't be repeating the terms here. But as the study continues, make sure to try to memorize what these terms are. Some will be technical words you may never use, but even knowing what they are will be good as you read and study other books and resources. You may not use the terms, but others will, and instead of assuming you don't know what they are talking about, having the knowledge will enhance your study time.

## Theology and Doctrinal Books

Books that specifically tackle particular doctrines or theology differ from commentaries in that they go after a concise understanding of how theology and doctrine work as weaved throughout the whole bible, not just a specific look at a book of the bible. One method of study is called "systematic theology," where you build a "system" by which theology is connected to each other. This is a very important part of study that helps us get an overall view of particular doctrines using the whole counsel of God.

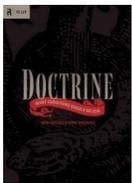


**\*\*Systematic Theology** by Wayne Grudem.

One of the most thorough, well written books on doctrine and theology, Grudem's work is a staple in most bible teachers' and pastors' libraries. Intimidating at first, it is surprisingly readable and understandable, and it is easy to find the particular aspects of theology with his thorough index and footnotes.

**1291 Pages. \$45 MSRP \$28 Regular Amazon Price**

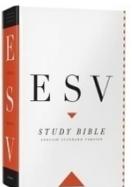
A smaller, 528 page, \$19.79 abridged version is also available.



**\*\*Doctrine** by Mark Driscoll.

This is not as thorough, but easy to read and full of the great "essentials" of the Christian faith. Driscoll offers a biblical, and very balanced view of the "closed hand" theological doctrines, and the book is written a little more conversational than "Systematic Theology," which is a lot more text book style.

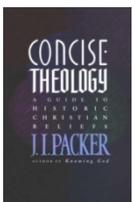
**463 Pages. \$22.99 MSRP \$16 Regular Amazon Price**



**\*\*The English Standard Version (ESV) Study Bible** (Crossway)

This bible has lots of great commentary, graphs, charts, full color maps, a great appendix full of sections on doctrinal overviews, how we got the Scriptures, biblical ethics, how to read and interpret the bible, and more. It also comes with a free online resource that includes the bible itself, all the maps, a concordance, and all the resources, all searchable.

**\$49.99 MSRP \$29 Regular Amazon Price**



**\*\*Concise Theology** by J.I. Packer.

Packer is another theologian whose commentaries and writings have inspired and helped teach thousands. He is one of the most influential modern day theologians and authors and has authored or contributed to dozens of books about the supremacy of God, His glory, holiness, and worship. This more compact book on theology is a great start at understanding the essentials.

**267 Pages. \$12.48 Regular Amazon Price**

There are a *number* of other great books out there to read. If you are interested in a particular topic, go to the **Practical Tools** at the end of each section to see recommended reading and web resources. Additionally, check the Appendices to see a complete list of recommended reading.

## A NOTE ON STUDYING:

If studying is a fairly new thing for you, and money is probably an issue for you as well, consider a few things to get you started. First of all, it must be said that what the foundation of your study of the Word should be is three things:

1. **Your brain**
2. **The Holy Spirit**
3. **The Word**

Your goal, as you *train* yourself how to study the Word, is to do as much as you can in your time of reading, studying, and meditating by starting off just using your brain, your bible, and by asking the Holy Spirit to lead you, teach you, and reveal truth to you. To do this, using the following three tools is important and incredibly helpful.

- **A good study bible:** You probably have “your bible” that you are attached to. That’s good. Consider getting a good study bible for your specific study time. One with a different translation is great, to give you other insights. The **ESV** is a great translation for study, as it is very detailed in what words it chooses to translate.
- **A concordance:** Being able to look up each word in its original language is paramount for your study. You do not need to know a lick of Greek or Hebrew to find great meaning in these words. A concordance helps you do this, and it’s not rocket science, so don’t be intimidated.
- **Computer software:** This can help you out dramatically, and even save you money (and time). You can automatically scratch off the need to spend \$20 on a concordance if you can go online. Or, if you happen to buy the **ESV Study Bible** (listed below), it comes with a searchable program, including a concordance.

Once you have exhausted your “own” research and feel like you’ve done and studied as much as you can on your own, *now* it is time to check your findings. By doing this, we are adding to the list of three one more important, God-mandated tool:

#### 4. **The body of Christ**

We have to realize that God has called us into a family and that we are not to be prideful Lone Ranger Christians. We have been given to each other for a purpose. It is both wise and biblical to seek accountability, understanding that God has indeed blessed and ordained fellow Christians to teach each other. That said, at this point of course it’s important to remember that as you check your findings with others (friends, pastors, commentaries, online sermons, etc.), that these other sources are indeed just human. However with that heart of humility and discernment, we will do our due diligence in seeking truth in this accountability as we construct our doctrine. Here are a few tools you should employ after you have exhausted your own searches.

**A “whole bible” commentary:** It’s good to have something like this, just in case you’re looking around in particular parts of the bible. That said, these aren’t cheap, and having a good study bible may negate the need to buy one, as they have, albeit limited, commentary at the bottom of each page of Scripture.

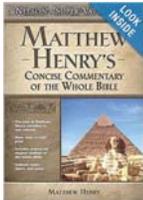
**A good theology or doctrine book:** Though going through the bible verse by verse is the best for study, having a book that helps you grasp the big, “close handed” theologies and doctrines of our faith is a great tool to have. These seem intimidating, but they are broken down per doctrine, in bite size sections. This will help prevent from what I call “buffet theology,” where we just pick the verses we like that support what we believe. Instead, we build a “systematic theology,” which is a system of verses, more like an intertwining, interdependent web, rather than a compartmentalized buffet, that includes *all* the verses, *even* the ones that *seem* to oppose each other. It’s sort of like Jenga, where all the verses are dependent on each other.

**Individual commentary books:** Once you have a couple good foundational books, like the ones above, you can slowly, one by one, add to your collection as you tackle particular books of the bible.

Check out some of the following specific recommendations for your study collection. There are countless more, but these would be great places to start.

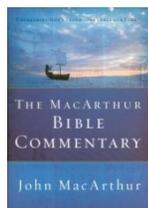
# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR BIBLE STUDY

## Bible Commentaries



**\*\*Matthew Henry Whole Bible Commentary:** A time tested work from the 1800's, this study done by Presbyterian pastor Matthew Henry has been a foundational work for thousands of pastors and bible students, from C.H. Spurgeon (who said if you can only afford few books, you need this) to George Whitefield (who read it four times).

**\$11 at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).**



**\*\*MacArthur Bible Commentary:** A thorough, scholarly look at the entire bible which includes lots of cross references and insights. MacArthur adds a great resource for your bible study, especially for an all in one book.

**\$25.99 at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).**

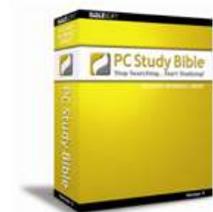


**\*\*The LifeChange Series** by NavPress: This is a great, inexpensive little series of bible study books that will dramatically help you study the Scriptures on your own. It doesn't simply give you information like a commentary, but it teaches and helps you use bible study tools that you will use for the rest of your life. Highly recommended for every book you choose to study.

**\$4.99 at [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com).**

**NOTE:** check out [www.bestcommentaries.com](http://www.bestcommentaries.com) for more information on great commentaries of all sorts. Whole bible, Old Testament, New Testament, various books of the bible, you name it. A great resource with great reviews.

## Bible Study Software



**\*\*PC Study Bible** is my highly recommended program. Go to [www.biblesoft.com](http://www.biblesoft.com).

**\*\*Logos** is also another highly recommended program. It is both **PC** and **Mac compatible**.

**\*\*QuickVerse** is similar to PC Study Bible but is **Mac compatible**. Go to [www.QuickVerse.com](http://www.QuickVerse.com).

**\*\*Online Resources** that are free and helpful are [www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net), [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) and [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org).

You can purchase all of these resources through **CBD (Christian Book Distributors)** on-line at [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com), or check **Family Christian** in Escondido (off Valley Parkway). For more discounts, find them new or used on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

## A Few Tools for Good Bible Study

1. **Read the entire text thoroughly a few times.** Use multiple translations to help you (NIV, ESV, NASB, etc.).
2. **Then, focus on a particular paragraph or section**
  - a. **Think in context!** It is important to remember that “Context is king!” Read a whole section before studying a single verse.
3. **Next, go one by one, studying each verse.**
  - a. **Do a word search** (this is called cross reference). Refer to the “**Word Study**” part of the LGHW for a way to get started. This helps you see how certain words or phrases were used elsewhere in the bible, giving you a broader, more balance context. Remember to use multiple translations.  
  
**b. Look up the word in its original language.** Though this sounds difficult, it is not. Also see the “**Word Study**” for more direction on this. This tool helps you see the exact meaning for the words. It gives you more context. Try [blueletterbible.com](http://blueletterbible.com) or purchase software like **Logos** or **PC Study Bible**.
4. **Once you have read and studied on your own, it is time to meditate on the verses.** Pray as you read them again. Ask God to reveal to you what He intended for us to know and walk in. Thank Him for the truths that He is showing you, and ask Him to reveal more as you study.
5. **Now, it’s a good time to check your findings.** You can do this in many ways; it is always good to hold yourself accountable with your studies and check with others.
  - a. **Open a commentary.** Commentaries are writings based on the studies of other theologians. While incredibly helpful, it is important to remember that only God’s Word is perfect. Try [bestcommentaries.com](http://bestcommentaries.com) for solid reviews and direction. Also, a good Study Bible will have good commentary in it.
  - b. **Read other sources.** There are many great books (and bad ones) out there. Try [discerningreader.com](http://discerningreader.com) for some helpful reviews. But remember, make reading/studying the bible your number one goal, time wise and priority wise. Check out [thevillagechurch.net](http://thevillagechurch.net), [desiringgod.org](http://desiringgod.org), and [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org) and use their search engine for good articles, sermons, and writings on biblical principles and doctrine.
  - c. **Ask a pastor, Community Group Leader, or solid mentor if what you feel like you found is solid.** Having a good conversation to walk and talk through questions is always a good thing. Be humble and teachable.
6. **Invest time.** This kind of growth in study skills does not come overnight.
7. **Be patient, be deliberate, and work hard.** Don’t rush, don’t get frustrated, keep going and work hard at it.

## How to Get the Most Out of This Class

- Read through the class handout more thoroughly. Look up all the Scriptures, especially when you feel a little lost or if something isn't clear or is new to you.
- Do cross reference word searches on topics. If we are studying the will of God, do a cross reference on words like "will," "desire," "plans," etc.
- Look up the corresponding topic in another theological book. Check the footnotes in each section. There will often be referenced other works that are more thoroughly dedicated to that particular topic. If something is particularly intriguing to you, look up those books on [christianbook.com](http://christianbook.com) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). It's always a good thing to learn from others and compare notes as theologians will emphasize certain parts of theology more than others. They could be saying the same thing but highlighting something you missed when you listened to someone else's teaching.
- Watch or listen to other theologians teaching on the subject. In addition to books, you can watch or listen to online sermons. Here's a few great resources:
  - [www.desiringgod.com](http://www.desiringgod.com). This is John Piper's ministry page. Go here and type what you are looking for in the search box and see what comes up. Piper has a nice, easy going, congenial personality and an incredibly gifted mind for the Word of God.
  - [www.thevillagechurch.net](http://www.thevillagechurch.net). This is the church that Matt Chandler teaches and leads. Chandler is also the President of the Acts29 Network. Again, do a search on your desired topic by using their search tool. You will find lots of videos, sermons, blogs, and articles.
  - [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org). This is a network of various evangelical authors, theologians, pastors, and leaders who bring sermons, interviews, articles, and resources onto one website. Go here for any number of great resources on nearly any topic. Life Mission Church is included in TGC's church directory.
  - [www.marshallchurch.org](http://www.marshallchurch.org). This is the church that Mark Driscoll teaches at. Mark is a tell-it-like-it-is kind of a guy, and his approach is more often than not challenging. Again, do a search on your desired topic by using their search tool. You will find lots of videos, sermons, blogs, and articles.
  - [www.gty.org](http://www.gty.org). This is the ministry of John MacArthur called Grace to You. If you do a search here you will find a tremendous amount of sermons and articles. Additionally, under their "Q&A" section on the toolbar on the left, you can view many common questions asked by Christians.
  - [www.christianessentialsbc.com/messages](http://www.christianessentialsbc.com/messages). This website has an exhaustive collection of Wayne Grudem's lectures from his book, *Systematic Theology*. Open up the page, and at the bottom you'll see a choice of five years, from 2005 to 2010. The *Systematic Theology* lectures start in 2005 and end in 2009 and they correspond with each chapter of his book, so it's pretty easy to find the right sermon on the right topic if you have the book.
- You are also very welcomed and encouraged to send questions to me at [jobey@lifemission.tv](mailto:jobey@lifemission.tv). I love to help and I love to equip people in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, so don't be shy. Of course, I don't know what to expect on how many questions I will get, so it may take a little time for a decent reply, but I guarantee you I will put thought and care into each response. The Word of God is tremendously important to me, and I don't take handling it lightly. My friends and family are also tremendously important to me, and I don't take handling their lives and sanctification lightly. So it's pretty much a win/win situation.

